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THE VULGARIANS

By Edgar Fawcett

APRIL had been petulant and even savage, but May had succeeded her with skyfuls of bland blue above, and with timid yet diligent greeneries below. In this far Western town, built on a flat plain, whence the Rockies, with their scintillant summits, were distantly visible, Nature seemed to have laid herself down as if from fatigue. She had done such dazzling things, you might have said, a hundred miles eastward, that she had taken a sort of blank breathing-spell before greeting the Pacific with that new occidental Italy which has been named California.

As young Leander Troop came sauntering through the high street of Stratton, he bore with a certain soldierly carriage his tall and graceful form. But into the gray crystal of his eyes had crept a new dimness, and on his blooming and clean-lined face had fallen a subtle pall of worry.

"Such a mighty sum!" he kept thinking, "such a mighty sum! The lawsuit began ten years before father died. Heaven knows, we had money enough as 'twas. But now the lawsuit's settled, and we've got millions more."

Leander soon paused before the family dwelling. It was the largest private house in Stratton, and therefore, with its amplitude of yellow and cream-colored woodenness, it was also the ugliest. It had two enormous wings, each almost as big as itself.

One day—so the story runs—a person of critical knowledge and taste drifted

into Stratton. As he passed the Troop residence he is said to have murmured: "Dear, dear! With two wings as big as that why doesn't it fly away?"

The young man found his mother waiting for him. It was almost dinner-time; the Troops dined at half-past one.

"Where's the girls?" Leander asked, with crisp alertness. "We'd better see each other all together, right here, before thinking about dinner. Uncle Asa's been talking with me down at the place. I've got something pretty important to say."

The "place" was a real-estate office, over which Leander's uncle, Asa, had presided in lonely sovereignty ever since the death of his dearly loved brother, Matthew Troop.

"Important?" was the iteration. "Mercy, Lee! I hope it ain't anything horrid?"

"No, ma—oh, here are the girls. Sit down, Ernestine. Sit down, Lola. Now for it; now I'll fire away."

"I guess I know what you've got to tell us, Lee," said Lola, with head posed prettily sidewise. "You're engaged to Annie Shelton."

Leander started, and then replied, with peculiar gruffness: "Cut your nonsense, Lola. If I was, I'd let her tell it." He suddenly grew silent, as if this allusion to Annie had dealt him some sort of wound; but he soon found his voice again. "I've just been having a talk with Uncle Asa. The lawsuit's ended forever, and in our favor. Everything's clinched and riveted."

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Mrs. Troop gave a motherly shrug. "We're all just like babies about these matters. I guess your poor pa thought so, too, the same as your Uncle Asa does." She laughed, a little wearily. "I s'pose it means there's more money out o' those mines and railroads and things. Lord knows, we've got enough. I don't want any more, unless to give away."

"There is more money," said Leander, and he said it with so singular an accent that his three listeners gave one another sharp, flurried looks. "There's a great deal more." After this he spoke several sentences in the deliberative American way that so often accompanies disclosure of momentous tidings.

Presently Mrs. Troop began to cry. She was still a comely woman; blonde, with large eyes of infantile blue. Sorrow for an adored husband had somehow dulled the azure of those eyes with a mistiness indefinably sweet, like the sanctity rather than the actual trace of her widowhood tears.

"It scares me, Lee, it scares me! I feel it ain't right to have so much. If I was smart, and could spend it building colleges and 'sylums and such like! But I ain't smart; I'm only a foolish know-nothing! And each of us four has got the same! By the terms of your poor pa's will, you said, didn't you, Lee? Oh, it's awful! I feel as if there was a big weight on me. I feel as if I was being buried alive!"

"Oh, you'll get over that, ma," said Ernestine, rising and beginning to caress her.

"Yes, ma, you'll get over it," chimed in Lola, rising also and following her sister's example.

Leander moodily nursed one knee. "By George!" he mumbled, "this beats all! Why, the whole three of you take it in the glummiest kind of style."

Ernestine looked at her brother with fixity. "I don't," she said. "I'm glad. I'm ever so glad."

II

ASA TROOP had told his nephew that he would drop in after supper, and at eight o'clock he promptly appeared. The evening continued scarcely less warm than the day had been, and they all repaired to the main piazza and sat there in the dusk. A hazy, yet breezy, Spring heaven, full of delicate gleams of light, threw down on angular and unlovable Stratton the grace of a transfiguring glamour.

"Well," Asa began, "I guess Lee's told about the new turn o' things. I'd have told you, Maria, long ago, if I hadn't thought 'twould set your nerves on edge wonderin' who'd get the best o' the fight. Those two fellers, Heath and Rodney, are downed now, as they deserved to be ten years ago. Perjury's no name for their oaths in court, and if 'twas worth while to tighten the screws I could prove forgery, sure's a gun."

Then he grew explanatory, but only as far as the unbusinesslike intelligence of his listeners would permit. He went over the battlefield, so to speak. Here was a big repulse for the foe; there victory had wavered; here was a pitched fray; there, finally, a just cause had triumphed. He portrayed Heath and Rodney with their bravado hanging about them in tatters, and their braggadocio turned to whimpers. Then he touched on the *spolia optima*, the conquerors' almost unparalleled prize of gold.

His brother's death had left him with a deep sorrow and a vast responsibility. Matthew and he had loved each other as brothers rarely love. Immense profit had come to them from the buying and selling of land; but it had been their tact, shrewdness, pluck and luck, all blended, that had enabled them to reap from great mountainous gold-mines of both silver and gold this harvest whose enormity now stood unquestioned. People hundreds and thousands of miles aloof, Asa told himself, would soon be saying: "Another of those colossal fortunes out

there, all fallen to a single family." There had been a great deal of money when Matthew died, but there would soon be an amount so much greater that he often thought of it with bated breath. Here was a family actually inundated with wealth. And such a family! The position was ludicrous. Again and again he reviewed it.

First, his sister-in-law: There were horses and dogs that might have struck you as possessing more cerebral force. She appeared to be made up of instincts. She had been a poor girl, kind and sweet to the core of her simple heart, and she had never really been anything else.

Next, Leander: Well, there was one matter to be thankful for—this future young Aladdin might assume airs that would set folks tittering behind his back, and he might commit blunders of taste that would shock propriety to its centre; but he would never soil himself with silly vices.

Next, Ernestine: No wonder they called her handsome! She had her father's flashing hazel eyes, his wavy black hair, his fresh-textured skin, which years of laborious life had never blighted. She had not done ill at school, showing brains there, no less than beauty. Her brother had lately paid serious court to Annie Shelton, a shoemaker's daughter, and it looked as though this were his final choice. But Ernestine had not "kept company" with anyone. She had twenty admirers, and not a single lover. She wished to go East; she had even a hankering after Europe. She was a practical girl, but she also had her streak of romance. It was a streak, too, that went far in; it dove to bed-rock. But wasn't it too late, now, for her to become a fine lady? Wasn't it too late to repair the insufficiencies of her past bringing up? This realization might drive her back to Stratton if she ever went far afield. Uncle Asa, dreading perils and disappointments, fervently hoped that it would.

Next, Lola: Of course, she had been a baby at two—she was still a baby at twenty-one. There were cer-

tainly six young men in Stratton waiting to marry her, and she had never been able to decide which one she would take. The nonsensical part of it was that she loved them all—in Lola's way. She loved everybody, man, woman and child, who was nice to her. And since everybody was more or less nice, it followed that she went about scattering her smiles on the entire population of Stratton, from boot-black to bank-director. "Dear little thing," pursued her everywhere, as a bee's buzz will pursue a nosegay. In her plumpness and rosi-ness, with her mother's innocent blue eyes, sunny-haired and dimpled as Hebe, saying silly things with the dainty, unconscious courage of a brook that babbles among its cresses, she was just a human kitten, a feathery nonentity. When you tried to conceive of her as a great heiress, you seemed to be putting the wings of an eagle on the ribs of a wren.

Uncle Asa's position partook of drama, and drama extravagantly new. He had gained for these four recipients a tremendous dower, but one fraught, for each of them, with a novelty pungent, unique. Much of their past had been his to manipulate and superintend; their future must be their own. What would they do with it? What pathetic things might they not do with it? Was not this bulk of affluence both ludicrously and mournfully misplaced?

"Yes, we've got it all safe and sound at last," Asa now continued. "I'd figured the whole sum out pretty careful before I told Lee. He said, Maria, that you took it kind o' melancholy, first off." Here the speaker laughed a throaty laugh that somehow suited his native whine and drawl; it sounded like the crushing of thick-shelled nuts. "But I'm glad to see you got over the blow," he concluded, with drowsy satire.

"It's lucky we've got you to take care of it for us, Asa," said Mrs. Troop, quaveringly.

This gave her brother-in-law the cue he wanted. "Oh, bet your life,

all of ye, I'll take care of it! But there's one thing I'd better say straight out: I mean to stick right here, round these parts, as long as I live. No globe-trottin' for me. Now you, Maria, may want to go roamin' East with Lee and the girls?"

"No, no," asseverated Mrs. Troop. "I ain't goin' to leave Stratton. I've lived here with *him*, and I hate bustlin' about. Let Lee take the girls without me."

"Oh, p'r'aps you'll change your mind, ma, at the last minute," said Lola.

"That's so," added Ernestine.

"No, no," repeated their mother; "it's goin' to be awful, but I'll stay here."

"How long, Ernie," asked her uncle, "did you propose to stay?"

"About a year and a half," was Ernestine's prompt reply.

"Oh!" shivered Mrs. Troop.

"Yes," pursued the girl, imperiously, "about a year and a half. We couldn't do very well with less."

"Not for the first time," broke in Lola.

"For the first time!" thinly bleated Mrs. Troop. "You mean, then, to keep at it!"

Ernestine stiffened haughtily in her chair. "Oh, very well. Ma's settled it, hasn't she, Lee? Hasn't she, Lola? We won't go at all. We ought to 'a' gone two or three years ago, but now we'll just poke along in this out-of-the-world place all the rest of our lives. Lee can take trips from time to time, and come back and tell us about the fine things he's seen. I'd suffer just as much as ma would, but I ain't going, all the same. Neither is Lola, I guess. Are you?" finished Ernestine, rather wailfully, addressing her sister.

"Not if you ain't," returned Lola, with her gay voice grown sepulchral.

III

MEANWHILE Uncle Asa smiled to himself there in the starry gloom.

Both the girls were devotedly fond of their mother, and each quailed before the prospect of separation from her. Ernestine's threat that she would stay at home was really meant, as he divined, for a lure of persuasion.

But Mrs. Troop remained obdurate. Her children might go East, but she would not. The retirement of her wonted surroundings refused to be broken. Habit, timidity, an uncontrollable bashfulness and diffidence, wove barriers thick as fortresses of thorns. The whole town pitied her. She was immensely popular in Stratton, but then so were all her kin. She disliked to think she was envied, and instinctively taught her children the same aversion.

These children, Leander included, their Uncle Asa had often covertly watched. He had heard his nephew charged with being "stuck up." More than once Asa caught himself hoping that the charge was true. When these children should go forth among the money-worshipers, among people who would not respect innocence and unworldliness as did the Strattonites, then sudden bitter and corrupting lessons might be taught them, lessons that would fill them with acute pain and dire disgust before being faced and learned.

An actual multitude accompanied the trio to their train on the day of departure. All the girls' beaux were there, and all of Leander's feminine favorites—except one.

Annie Shelton did not go. She stayed in her little room over her father's shoeshop, which was not far from the railway station, and sat there listening to the cheers that followed the travelers as they were borne away. Her eyes were hard and glassy. It seemed as if she could not weep. For a short while her needle lay idle; then, with hands that were leaden, she lifted it, and began to sew the coarse garment rumpled in her lap. This work meant bread for the little household, hardly less than did her father's persistent

cordwaining. Her mother was always ill, and her brothers and sisters were yet too young to work.

Every offer of charity her father refused. He was held in Stratton an embittered, cynical person, with odd and repellent views of life. Nevertheless, the idea of a marriage between his daughter and Leander pleased him, despite all his alleged hatred of capitalism.

Shorn of his wealth, Annie's lover would in all respects have been easily her inferior. She was that exceptional product, found in no other country on earth save the United States, a working-girl with a finely trained intellect. She had gone through the same school that Ernestine and Lola had attended, but unlike them she had there won marked honors. Afterward she might have earned her living in one of the hundred ways open to young women of capacity and culture fairly distinctive. But the malady of her mother had commenced just after she quitted school, and hence she had given up every tempting chance.

"Never mind," her friends had latterly begun to say among themselves; "Lee Troop is going to marry her soon, and his mother and sisters won't put a straw in the way, for they're all three fond of her. And why not? She's as good as all their gold, and pretty enough to be the wife of a president."

Pretty she certainly was, with her profuse amber hair and milky skin. Till the very last meeting with Leander she had believed he would never depart from Stratton for so long an absence without giving her that one little chainwork of words that would seem to her like a bracelet he had locked on her wrist, he himself carrying away the key.

She would have died rather than tell him of the torture he was dealing her. It had all happened only the evening before. He had often kissed her, but she would not let him kiss her good-bye. Then, as love made her

so quickly perceive, he grew piqued. Did he want some excuse for turning cold—for going away with a certain vital request unuttered?

They had talked on. She smiled while her heart sank lower and lower. She was not of the kind that break down and sobbingly protest. She merely looked a little paler, and felt as if invisible powers were stitching the shroud of a priceless hope.

Soon he had left her, with a long pressure of the hand and a smiling entreaty for one farewell kiss. But she laughed bravely back, and he went away; and then it seemed as if she heard the vague sound of a coffin lowered into its grave. She had heard the sound ever since.

IV

By mutual agreement Leander and his sisters made few and short stoppages till they at last reached New York. They had all seen Chicago. The girls had gone there when children with their father, and to a number of the larger Western cities besides. A hunger for the still greater metropolis now possessed them.

But meanwhile the transcontinental journey had been associated with some rather exciting hints of their new importance. They rested only two days in Chicago, at the Palmer House, where they occupied sumptuous apartments—not because they had ordered them, but because the clerks at the desk took it for granted that such accommodations would be desired—and while there they were visited by a horde of interviewers.

This frightened them all, and if Lola was the most embarrassed and astounded—sandwiching the inane responses between giggles—Leander proved by no means a collected "subject." Ernestine alone carried herself with anything that resembled an air. But all three struck the one note of innocent candor.

They spoke of their past days in Stratton with a freedom from con-

cealment that afterward made curious reading. It sent shudders through some of the rich parvenus who perused it in print, and it roused mighty mirth in hundreds of homes. With others, again, it set vibrating the chords of sympathy and compassion. "What will happen," these wondered aloud, "if the young plutocrats are not taught more civilized behavior?"

But still another element, the lucre-lovers, those to whom the getting and holding of money made the kernel and flavor of human life, intruded on our little group their truckling salaams. Then, also, the beggars, genteel or shabby-genteel, cautious or audacious, plaintive or self-reliant, were palpably stirred.

A few hours at the Palmer House had whitened the Troops' drawing-room tables with visiting-cards. At first everybody was admitted, everybody heartily welcomed. But toward evening weariness blent itself with suspicion. Their notoriety not only lost its pleasant flavor—it tasted harshly of persecution as well.

The next day, on leaving their hotel for a walk, they found themselves almost mobbed by impertinent starers. Lola began to tremble and threaten tears. Leander hailed a carriage, in desperation.

"Will it be like this in New York?" quavered Lola.

"I guess not," said Leander. His annoyance had vanished; he leaned back in his seat with a self-complacency that ill became him.

"I hope not!" sighed Ernestine, with emphasis.

"Let's go to a small hotel when we get there," urged Lola. "And let's ask them if they won't keep our names out of the book."

"Oh, that wouldn't do," objected Leander, with a judicial frown. "We ain't going to sneak in. We didn't steal our money, if we have got such a heap."

"I never thought people cared so about money," said Ernestine, solemnly.

"Neither did I," Lola chimed in. "Ain't it awful?" And she laid a burning cheek on her sister's shoulder.

"Some of the folks that pushed their way into our parlors!" Ernestine shivered. "Why, they made me feel real sick, sometimes! I guess lots were poorer than poverty. I got so that I couldn't understand what half of 'em were driving at, with their talk about this kind of charity and that. And some of the women's faces were so woebegone! I must have given out a lot of greenbacks, and so did you, Lola, before——"

"Before I pulled you up and brought you to your senses," Leander broke in. He was sitting upright now; he had begun to move his head rather pompously from side to side. "Look here, girls, you're both of you as green as grass. You've got to keep your eyes open and your mouths shut—understand? We're all of us in a very funny kind of a box. But nobody's going to get the best of me—you can bet your life there. All the humbugs we speak a word to will think us fine game for their tricks. I ain't delivering any lecture. But you've learned your lesson, and don't go back on it."

Ernestine was staring out of the carriage window, with a certain sweet wildness in her dark eyes. "It's so queer for Lola and me to snub folks, Lee. We've never done it before. We've always trusted everybody unless we knew they were bad, and we've mostly either liked them or pitied them—often both."

"Oh, yes, of course," replied Leander, with a superiority of manner that struck his hearers as somewhat impromptu, to say the least. "But now there's a big change. You ain't in Stratton any more; you're out in the wide, wide world." Leander repeated this last clause. It had for him a rather poetic sound. He felt a new responsibility enrobing him; he must talk, hereafter, more like the prominent somebody he had become. He imagined himself drinking in a new dignity of demeanor with every fresh breath.

"It's an awful wide world, I begin to think," said Lola.

"It takes me off my feet and makes my head spin," supplemented Ernestine. "It's like going up high in a swing till your feet touch the tree-leaves, and then having that funny feeling in the pit of your stomach."

Leander waved a remonstrating hand. "I guess I wouldn't express myself like that, Ernie."

Both sisters burst out laughing. "Why?" they chorused.

"Well, 'pit of the stomach' ain't, somehow, the—er—politest kind of talk."

"Go 'long!" smiled Ernestine; and Lola added, "My!"

"New York won't be like this," Leander continued, quite as if he knew all about it, from the Battery to Bronx River. "Oh, no; you'll see."

They did see. The Waldorf-Astoria was their inn of refuge. But no refuge was really required. They were shown, after eleven o'clock one evening, to apartments that dazzled them with beauty and splendor. They breakfasted privately next morning in a room of such ornate embellishments that it almost took away their appetites. This was not because of any given order, but for the simple reason that Leander, after signing his own and his sisters' names, had said, with pregnant brevity: "Best in the house, please." And the best in the house they had lavishly secured.

He went out, soon after breakfast, and while passing forth from the magnificence of this gigantic hotel into Fifth avenue, felt surprise that his presence should attract no attention whatever. It was a surprise not wholly agreeable. The adulation of Chicago had roused his vanity more than he had known till now. New York struck him as a hideously ugly place, but one abounding and reveling in wealth. Still, was there anybody in it much richer than he? Oh, a few, perhaps, and these only by one or two trifling millions.

Suddenly he looked down at his

boots, and saw that they were not blacked. He had forgotten to put them outside his door when he went to bed the previous night. He had only two or three pairs, and the others were stuffed away somewhere in his unpacked trunks. A boot-black just then called to him, "Shine, boss?" as he passed a corner. At once he answered the summons and gave himself, so to speak, in charge. It did not occur to him that he was doing what no member of the Four Hundred would do. He had heard of the Four Hundred, just as he had heard of Fifth avenue, and he had very recently made up his mind that the best thing for him was to become a member of that organization with as little delay as possible. Of course, it was waiting to receive him, and the girls, with open arms. There were some Wall-street people whom he must see at once; he had letters to them from his Uncle Asa. He would find his way to them soon, and they would give him points, no doubt, on these social questions, just as they would instruct him respecting others of a pecuniary kind.

When his boots were made almost as brilliant as the Springtide sun, he bethought himself of paying the olive-skinned Italian who had served him. He did so by producing a very fat wad of bills and choosing from these, not without a little tell-tale crook of the elbow, a one-dollar note. The youth leaped to his feet and caught his reward in both hands, while showering on its donor pell-mell benedictions, half-English and half-Neapolitan. Leander grinningly nodded, and strutted away. He had never strutted like that in Stratton—nor anywhere else.

Already the sense of his wealth had begun to make him drunk. It had gone to his head ever since the Chicago episode; and, unlike that of vinous potation, its influence grew rather than waned. He caught himself staring into the eyes of passers-by, as if demanding of them some recognition. When he returned to the hotel and rejoined his sisters he car-

ried a parcel of newspapers. To open them and skim through their columns caused the sharpest reaction.

Chicago had telegraphed to New York. "The March of the Troops," "The Mobbing of the Millionaires," and other scornful, petulant, personal headlines were flaunted from sheet after sheet. And the sarcasm, the ridicule, the merciless fun-poking that ensued! Ernestine and Lola read with little raw cries and quick catchings of the breath.

"Are we such gawks and geese?" moaned the elder girl.

"To publish about me that I squint!" panted the younger.

"And that I lit a cigar before a crowded roomful," growled Leander, "with a twenty-dollar bill!"

"Let's go home," ululated Lola.

"Home! Bosh!" cried Leander, starting up, red with wrath. "We've got to a land of civilization. We——"

A knock at the door cut him short. He presently found himself scanning a card. "*The Evening Ensign*, eh? Tell him I won't see him."

"It's a lady, sir," said the hotel servant who had brought the card.

"Tell every newspaper man, woman or child that comes," fumed Leander, "just this." Then he explained his "just this" in terms of condensed yet poignant profanity, and the man disappeared with a suppressed giggle.

"Do the same, girls," he said, re-approaching his sisters, "while I'm gone."

"Oh, we don't swear, Lee," chided Ernestine, "though we may be as backwoods-like as these horrible papers call us."

"Where are you going?" inquired Lola.

"I'm—er—going down-town," said Leander, buttoning the ready-made Spring overcoat he had bought in Stratton. "That's what they call it here—down-town. By the way, I ought to have a pair of kid gloves."

"Yes," agreed Lola. "You don't look stylish enough. Does he, Erne?"

"Oh, I dunno," said Ernestine.

"I guess he looks all right. But I would get a pair of kid gloves, Lee, if I was you."

"And a high hat," suggested Lola. "But what'll we do while you're gone?"

"Order a carriage and take a ride," suggested her brother. "It's an elegant day. I'll speak to 'em down-stairs. I'll tell 'em to get up the finest outfit the house can afford. Go to Central Park."

Lola, forgetting her past distress, became all smiles. "Central Park! Oh, yes! We've heard so much about it! Kitty Strong nearly went wild over it, last Summer."

"I wanted to see the Brooklyn Bridge first," said Ernestine, with the superior manner of one who profits by thoughtful reading at the threshold of a famed foreign city. "But perhaps," she added, "we can take the bridge in as we go to Central Park."

"Perhaps so," said Leander. "I'll ask 'em down-stairs."

He did—to the keen but veiled amusement of a polite clerk. He was told that the best way to reach Wall street was by one of the elevated trains. But this mode of conveyance did not please Leander when he had learned the price it would cost. He insisted on a carriage, and sailed out of the hotel to find himself confronted by a hansom cab. At once he recoiled. The hansom wouldn't do at all. What kind of a wagon did they call that? Two wheels, and the reins running sky-high over the roof!

There chanced to be no coupé or larger vehicle just then at hand, so the porter, a sapient person of much facial control, assured him that the hansom was the great popular London cab. At the mention of London Leander cocked his head sidewise. He intended to go to London before he set eyes again on Stratton. The very mention of that mighty metropolis thrilled him. He got into the hansom, and gave the porter, who had visions of a possible quarter, a two-dollar note.

The crowds and clamors of Broadway soon exhilarated him. Nevertheless, he felt crestfallen. Those newspapers! Couldn't a fellow be enormously rich without having flocks of human geese so evilly hiss at him? Now and then he felt a Nero-like cruelty stir his young veins. He wanted to buy up Chicago, and then burn it for the second time. He began to realize one moment that his ignorance plus his money made him a caricature, and to tremble, the next, with desire that his detractors might be punished.

In Wall street and the region thereabout he called on a banker or two and on several brokers. His uncle had given him some introductory letters, and these he presented with flourishes galore. His associates in Stratton would scarcely have recognized him. He addressed men more than twice his age with a pert self-security that verged on superciliousness. He had a voice naturally loud, and what has been called "the Western burr" clung to it at all times with stubborn tenacity.

On the arm of this or that prominent financier he would familiarly lay his hand. "Look here, now," he would propose, "I guess I'll get ye just to do this for me."

The arm was never withdrawn. The courteous countenances never grew forbidding. This stripling might be offensive, but his propositions, like his very presence, exhaled aromas of transcendent riches.

"Have a cigar?" he said to Rupert K. Renshawe, one of the most powerful grandees of New York finance. He said it after clouding the small oak-paneled office with a voluminous smoke-puff, and then took from his waistcoat pocket a little olive-and-black crow-bar of tobacco, belted with silver and gold.

"Thanks very much, Mr. Troop; but I do not smoke."

"Oh, well, give it to some of your friends." And Leander tossed the cigar on a near table. "I guess they'll like the flavor of it. I bought

'em at a tobacco-store as I was riding down-town. Paid seventy-five cents apiece for 'em. Pretty steep, wasn't it? But they're darned good."

"I'd like to throw it back in your saucy face," thought Rupert K. Renshawe. But aloud he spoke very blandly.

"By the way, Mr. Troop, your two sisters are with you, as I learn, at the Waldorf-Astoria. I have asked my wife to do herself the pleasure of paying them a visit. No doubt they will recognize her name——"

"Oh, Lord! your name's known from here to 'Frisco. They kind of expected you or Mrs. Renshawe would call. Let's see. It must be about twelve years ago since my father and you met here in New York. Some big railroad scheme, wasn't it? I rec'lect father talking afterwards of how elegant Rupert K. Renshawe entertained him. We three were all kids then, but I rec'lect his saying what a fine mansion you had on Seventh avenue——"

"Fifth."

"Fifth, was it? Oh, yes. And what fine victuals and drinkables you served at some big banquet you gave. Now, folks say that I favor my father. I'm shorter, o' course, but what do you think, sir, on that point?"

Mr. Renshawe pretended to think, while Leander tipped his chair back and gave his seventy-five-cent cigar an upward slant. "Your father, you young ass," came the reflection, "was worth ten of you. He was vulgar, and he teemed with the gambling instincts of the ex-miner; but he possessed brains, a smattering of courtliness, and a vivid if rough dignity."

Aloud, however, Mr. Renshawe said:

"Oh, yes; I see a marked resemblance. Who would not? Er—did I understand, Mr. Troop, that you wished to deposit with us two millions?"

Leander crossed one leg over the other. It always flattered him to be told that he looked like his father—

doubtless because he looked so extremely unlike him.

"Two millions, yes," he said, with another great cigar-puff. "I'll telegraph at once to Uncle Asa." For a moment he paused, and then threw back the lapels of his ill-made coat, bringing into relief a black shoe-lace necktie. "Well, on the whole, Renshawe, old man, I guess you better make it three."

V

Just as Ernestine and Lola were thinking of their afternoon drive to the Park, two cards were presented them. At first they both felt like flinging the slips of pasteboard unread into the grate; but a glance at the names caused this impulse to vanish.

"Mrs. Rupert K. Renshawe," said Ernestine. "Oh, Lola, don't you remember that Uncle Asa spoke of how pa met her husband here, and gave Lee a letter to him?"

"Yes," answered Lola; "Uncle Asa said he was a great banker. But the other card?"

"It's Mrs. Arthur Warrender's. I guess she must be a friend. Of course we must see them, Lola. I wonder if we're dressed right. I'm afraid we ain't. And our hair—they seem to do it different here."

Mrs. Renshawe came into the room, soon afterward, accompanied by her sister-in-law, Mrs. Warrender, a young widow, about four-and-twenty. Both ladies "took in" the Misses Troop after a very few minutes. But with Ernestine and Lola it was quite different. They put out their hands; they offered chairs: they beamed welcomes. But if their two guests had announced to them, "We have just arrived by an air-ship from the planet Mars," they could scarcely have been more astounded.

It soon seemed to them that the elderly, rather stout and handsome Mrs. Renshawe was quite as much astounded as they. At every fresh

word they spoke, her expression of controlled surprise, while vainly seeking to hide in civility, betrayed itself all the more. With Mrs. Warrender it was different. She was just as modish a figure, just as disconcerting in her quiet suggestions of another more refined and suaver feminine world, but the pure-carved face, broadening at the brows, and the limpid violet eyes, black-lashed, with a slight semicircle of sad darkness below each, wrought spells of unexplainable sympathy. She had not the hard, mature brilliance of her companion. She spoke less often than Mrs. Renshawe, but her sentences fell on the sisters' ears with an easier, less-confusing cadence.

Lola and Ernestine could not be other than themselves. They had never learned even the alphabet of social hypocrisy. When embarrassment had released them from its first benumbing thralls, they talked with a direct and untrammelled candor that was characteristic.

"I guess you ladies wouldn't care very much about Stratton," said Ernestine. "It's a very plain little city. We've never seen any folks in it like you are."

"No, indeed!" prattled Lola. "We get the fashions, though, in some of the magazines and weekly papers. But there ain't any dressmakers who can copy 'em properly. Ain't that so, Ernestine?"

"But dress is a minor matter, after all," said Mrs. Renshawe, who considered an ill-dressed woman more tedious, if less immoral, than a murdereress. "You'll have plenty of dressmakers ready at your command here, however, if you are willing to patronize them."

"Oh," cried Lola, "I love to hear that! We've got such quantities of money, now pa's old lawsuit is settled, that we needn't mind the expense one bit. We were pretty rich before, but now it's perfectly frightful!"

"Stop, Lola," said Ernestine. "The ladies will think you're bragging."

"Oh, I ain't bragging a single mite," denied Lola. "I hate having so much—that's all I meant." She paused, reddening, with a helpless look at her sister.

Ernestine told of the Chicago experience. Mrs. Renshawe smiled mechanically, but Mrs. Warrender looked a good deal of condolence and pity. It had been said of her that she possessed the art of making anyone like her, if so inclined. But these girls would not have admitted to you that it was an art at all. It seemed to them the most essential and inherent of graces.

"You shouldn't have trusted the hotel people," said Mrs. Renshawe, instructively. "You should have made your own servants post themselves at the doors of your rooms and stand guard there."

Ernestine exchanged a look with Lola. Then she said, quite simply: "We haven't got any servants, ma'am."

"No servants!" Mrs. Renshawe exclaimed. "You're not really traveling, like this, without your maids!"

"We never had maids, as you call them, in Stratton," said Ernestine. "They'd have laughed at us if we'd lived as fine as that. All we ever had was the family help." Here the girl's eyes glittered a little moistly, and her lips trembled, and two spots of rose deepened in her cheeks. She had no idea how pretty she looked as she went on speaking. "Oh, both you ladies are so different from us! When I look at you and hear your soft voices, and think of how you must have lived among beautiful things and worn handsome clothes and associated with other folks as grand as yourselves, I just feel like going straight back to Stratton." At this she abruptly turned toward her sister. "Oh, ain't I right, Lola? Don't you feel the same way?" She ended the words with a high, nervous laugh that made Lola spring toward her and catch both her hands.

"Why, Ernestine! Excuse her, ladies. She don't mean it. She's

only got worked up, same as I am. You came in so sudden—you took us all of a heap. We didn't expect you, and you made us feel so funny! You see, we've always been plain girls. I guess neither of us ever felt so bashful before. But Ernestine wouldn't go back to Stratton for many a month. Would you? Come, now, own up. Why, we expect to go to Niagara and Saratoga and Newport, don't we, Erne? And this very morning we were thinkin' about goin' back to see ma in the Fall and then comin' on again for a whole year of Europe."

When the ladies had reëntered their carriage at the door of the hotel, Mrs. Renshawe looked full into the eyes of her husband's sister.

"Well, Marian?"

Mrs. Warrender threw back her head, laughing, and for a moment all the delicate melancholy left her face.

"I suppose, Kate, you're enormously shocked."

"I don't suppose I'm any more shocked than you are. They're simply dreadful—there's no other word."

"Yes, there is. You've forgotten. They're both pretty."

"But their voices! One could measurably forgive their uncouth English—their 'guesses' and 'ain'ts.' But that twang, which seems to emanate, sometimes, from the very bowels of a bagpipe!"

"All that repels you could be eliminated." As Mrs. Warrender spoke her blue eyes were fixed on nothing in particular, save perhaps the broad sable blank of the coachman's back.

"No, no, Marian. The leopard——"

"Often does change its spots—that is, when the leopard's a young girl."

Mrs. Renshawe made use of a shining little vinaigrette. "They're both too old. Of course, clothes work wonders. But nowadays your shop-girl has the latest Parisian styles. Besides, the whole Rue de la Paix would only accentuate their crudities." Her tones took an irritated plaint. "I confess that I'm terribly disappointed."

The New York season was quite

over. Society was either going to those exquisite abodes reared so recently near country clubs on Long Island, or to Europe, or to stately homes along the Hudson. Newport would not exist socially until Midsummer and early Autumn. Already a few hot days had served to lessen the cliques of fashionables lingering in town. But even now, in the maturity of May, there were small dinners, though dancing had wholly ceased. To one of these minor repasts Mrs. Warrender drifted; to another, Mrs. Renshawe, though the latter went without her husband, the influential "Rupert K.," who had to dine elsewhere. Somebody was giving a great feast to a famed foreign politician.

By eleven o'clock Mrs. Warrender appeared in the large, dimly lighted drawing-room. She turned up one or two side-lights, throwing floods of soft revelation on the silks of tapestries, the colorful mossiness of carpets and mats, the precious pictures quite hiding the walls.

"How I hate these rooms!" she mused. "How I detest living in this house! How I long to do something that might shatter my dependence on Rupert and Kate!"

Very soon Mrs. Renshawe joined her, and she laid down the book that she had taken up a few minutes before. The two women sat together and talked over the people whom they had just been meeting. A footman brought Apollinaris, and placed it between them on a slim-legged ormolu table, and they sipped it from monogrammed crystal glasses while they talked.

"Those Troops," Mrs. Renshawe said, "were babbled about from soup till dessert."

"I found it the same way," Mrs. Warrender smiled. "I hope you were not too severe, Kate."

"Severe? No. I said I'd called on them this afternoon, and everybody pounced on me with questions. But I was very discreet. After all, poor rich things, I sha'n't cast the first stone."

There was no compassion in her voice, and Marian Warrender, who knew her least change of mood so well, perceived this. Had she been thinking of her boy, Gregory, his father's threats, their constant disagreements? Had she been thinking that Gregory might be tempted by the huge fortune of one of those girls, despite all the blunt rusticity of its possessor?

"My course was even more discreet," said the younger lady. "I made no mention of our visit. But the Troops are plainly an object of prodigious interest, just now, in smart circles."

"It will soon die out, Marian. The masses may retain it, but the classes will not. How can they? Neither here nor in England would any sort of real society tolerate those two young female bores. Of course, a good deal might be done for them in time. But it would need a year even to tear down the old structures and put up the new scaffoldings."

"Hardly, I should say, Kate."

"Oh, but it would. American women are very receptive, marvelously teachable, I grant. But Rome can neither be built nor demolished in a day." Mrs. Renshawe was slowly folding her long, pale gloves on the lap of her thin, gold-threaded gown. Fire shot from the diamonds on her fingers, and their white light seemed to detain her downward gaze. "I can imagine some refined man marrying one of them," she pursued, almost as if in transient soliloquy, "and taking her abroad for a long time—keeping her there under various tuitions, with excellent final results."

"She is thinking of Gregory," decided her listener, "of Gregory—that young nephew of mine—with his talents, his brilliancies, his ambitions, and, to me, his moral delinquencies!"

"But it should be done on the Continent, not in England," Mrs. Renshawe proceeded. "His wife would suffer there from far fewer mortifications. What difference do the French, Italians and Germans ever see between

one American woman and another, except beauty and dress?"

Marian sighed, rather strenuously. "I should hate to see either of those girls caught by a foreign title!"

Mrs. Renshawe lifted her brows. She rarely sneered, except in the presence of her sister-in-law. It made one unpopular; and, too, one could always say bitter things amiably. But she sneered now, with a sense of safety.

"Dear, dear! Have you fallen in love with those two gawks?"

"Oh, no," said Marian. "But I don't feel toward them as you do, Kate. They are genuine; they are pieces of human nature, utterly without adornment, yet utterly without deceit."

"I wonder if all the beaux in their deserted Stratton would endorse your verdict. They may have left behind them an uncouth crowd of heart-broken Sams and Tims—especially the blonde one, who uses her eyes, and giggles." Mrs. Renshawe seemed to say this no less lightly than cruelly. But at once a cloud passed over her face, vanishing quickly from its disciplined surface. "You spoke of a foreign title," she continued, serious hardness pervading her voice. "I didn't tell you that Lord Usk took me in to dinner this evening."

"No. I imagined you knew, Kate, that nothing about Lord Usk would concern me much."

"He bored me dreadfully, my dear. He did nothing but talk of you, and it all meant the same thing. He is madly in love with you, and I can't help him. Nobody can help him but yourself, and you will not stir a jot."

"I wish," said Marian, low-voiced, with a weary fall of the eyelids, "that you would always, in such cases, turn the tide of conversation."

"Good heavens! I'm not Joshua. I can't make the sun stand still! I say, Marian, look at me, please. No, not that way—full in the eyes."

"Well, Kate?"

"Do you realize that you are doing a very reckless thing? It needn't be detailed, for you must understand.

Rupert, your brother, is greatly out of patience with you. He likes Usk; he wishes intensely that you should become the man's wife."

"Put it this way, if you please: that I should become the Countess of Usk and Casilear."

Mrs. Renshawe nodded. "The double earldom, the two baronies, the excessively ancient lineage—it all attracts, it all carries weight. And then, Rupert has made the most searching inquiries. This man, still scarcely forty-one, is in the best English sets. He is even rich, as well."

"Not so rich but that he'd like to be a great deal richer," Marian mockingly retorted. "Rupert has hinted to me of 'settlements,' after the English fashion." Pain seemed to stiffen her lips, contracting their corners. "Oh, that is not all! Rupert has given some promise of a great amount to Usk, provided I am won over. You can't deny this, Kate. Your husband, my brother, is trying to sell me. There's no other word."

Mrs. Renshawe knew very well that there was no other word. She remembered, too, that Marian had not only divined this, but that her own lips had once—during a turbulent dispute—more than half-confessed it. She was not, by nature, a cold woman; the ossifying selfishness and pretension of her surroundings had done evil work with a spirit that elsewhere might have maintained reciprocity to the light and warmth of fine ideals. She truly pitied Marian, as it was; but a stern acquired worldliness forbade her to regard the young widow's posture as other than quixotic, despite its honesty.

"Everything, Marian, can be called harsh names. I'm sure that Rupert, whom neither you nor I could consider faultless, would detest clouding your future."

"I prefer to work out my own future. It is mine; it belongs to me."

"I wish most sincerely that in every sense it did. But you forget, and I must remind you, my dear——"

"Oh, you needn't remind me!"

struck in Marian, with each word a sort of throb. "When Arthur died he left me quite dependent on my step-brother."

"Step-brother? You cast a bitter hint, there. Still, I see—I see." And Mrs. Renshawe moodily nodded. "He will be very angry if you throw Usk over. I don't know just what he will do. I fear, though, that his treatment may flavor to you of tyranny. Not for an instant will I deny that ambition—snobbery, if you please—prompts him. He likes the idea of such a connection. But he will justify his liking of it by the assertion that you prefer to hug a morbid illusion instead of marrying one of the most cultivated and attractive of English peers."

Marian rose. In the great, half-lighted room her pallor wore a spectral sweetness. She went over to Mrs. Renshawe and took her hand.

"Good-night, Kate. Our lord and master will be coming home soon. I somehow can't meet him to-night. He never stays late at those big dinners, and it's getting late now. Of course I've seen for an age past that he thinks my deathless love for my dead husband 'a morbid illusion.'" She let her sister-in-law's hand drop, and slowly turned away. "If he sends me into the streets because I won't remarry, why, then, I must go there—that's all." She spoke faintly, but without the least vocal tremor. "You may tell him this, if you please. Matters have reached a crisis, I suppose. But I won't blench or flinch—nothing can make me."

Afterward, as she went up-stairs to her own room, a vague sound, hardly louder than the creak of a twig in stillness, fell from her lips.

"I wonder if it would be possible for me to bring it about. I might try—I might try. So many stranger things have happened. I mean to try."

VI

MRS. RENSHAW did not often "sit up" for her husband. They were not

an affectionate couple. She herself had not softened with the years, but he had grown iron-like; and she had watched the process in him with primal alarm and ultimate indifference. She had seen him rise from an ordinary broker to the head of a banking-house. Never a liberal man, possession had mantled him, as so often happens, with a relative miserliness. He counted his dollars, she often told him, as carefully as he had once counted his dimes. His best friend could only say of him that he performed his charities in secret. He was willing to spend largely on conspicuous things. His houses were of the handsomest, like his equipages and horse-flesh, and his wife had some striking jewels. But she was always complaining about the slenderness of her private purse, and affirming that she was the worst "sent out" woman of any in town who held a place equaling her own.

Occasionally she would fling him a jibe on the subject of his step-sister. Was there ever a lovelier woman than Marian? and what a pittance was given her to dress on!

But still oftener she wrangled with him concerning their son and only child, Gregory. Because his tastes did not run toward railway stocks and ledgers, he, too, must be treated with injustice. Had he not gone to Oxford and made his mark there, at the paternal wish? Was he not good-looking in marked degree? To call him conceited and snobbish was merely to misapply terms. He held himself with becoming self-esteem. He was a very intellectual young man, and he would one day be a great painter. Several famous French artists had told him so. And yet he wasn't allowed even to go to Paris. He had to work in a shabby little studio here—he, the son of a man who could give him twenty thousand a year and scarcely be aware of it. And all because he couldn't—not wouldn't, but couldn't—tie himself down to the dreary drudgery of a Wall-street counting-house. If he had

vices, the miserable monthly sums doled out to him would be excusable. But his life was all purity, fastidious refinement, artistic impulse.

Thus they had wrangled again and again. She was waiting for her husband now, but with no desire or aim to begin old disputes. Just before he had gone to the big dinner he had hurriedly told her that he had been called on, at his office, by Leander Troop. But he was late, and had glanced at his watch and hurried away, adding, with a little disgusted grimace: "I'll tell you about him when we next meet."

So curiosity kept her seated for a few minutes longer. But when she heard steps in the outer hall they turned out not to be her husband's. Gregory, her son, entered instead.

"My dear boy," she said, rising and kissing him, "I thought your dinner with your artist friends hadn't kept you so late as this."

"You supposed me slumbering benignly up-stairs, mamma? Well, you were wrong. Those three young Frenchmen were too fascinating for that. I took them from Delmonico's to my studio, and we smoked cigarettes and talked of the latest things the newest men had been painting. Their fluent French, their torrents of enthusiasm, their prodigious belief in themselves, hypnotized me. Fourth avenue became the Rue de Vaugirard, and Union Square transformed itself into the Parc de Luxembourg. Once more I was in Paris, conscious of a portly, black-eyed *concierger* at her post down-stairs, while all the door-knobs became the size of a walnut and the shape of an egg."

"You speak of the Faubourg St. Germain, Gregory. But you were never bohemian."

"In Paris all painters are bohemian—till they become famous."

He smiled as he said this, and the smile showed his small, shapely teeth below a slim arch of mustache whose ends pointed upward. Evening dress became his tall, supple figure, the

white waistcoat making little creases at the flexible waist. He had curly and silky hair, cut short, that receded at the temples, giving him the look one sees in portraits of Byron, a look from which the slim yet rounded throat and lean, sloping jaws by no means detracted. His mother thought him the most beautiful young man in the world, and there were others who shared her admiration, though within limits decidedly more sane.

"But you would never live that sort of life, Gregory; it isn't in you to live it. You would always be above it——"

"And yet of it," he interrupted. "Ah, that's my dream! Leisure to paint a single picture every three years, and then tear the canvas in shreds if I didn't absolutely approve it; leisure to talk of art more than I created in it, and to read of it more than I talked about it; leisure to be at once a patron of it and yet a reverent pupil; leisure to despise its trafficking side and yet to aid and encourage its worthy devotees. Two or three masterpieces would be all I should ever dream of achieving; yet the amiable years of which these would be productive I should pack with the rarest experiences life can afford."

This monologue entranced his mother. But she pretended to fault it, and tapped him sharply on the shoulder.

"I'm afraid your 'leisure' is only a pretty and egoistic synonym for great personal wealth."

"I want great personal wealth," retorted Gregory, "and I hope some day to have it." He twirled himself lightly round on his heels, with an airy waving of both arms. And this jaunty gyration brought him in full view of his father, who stood outlined against the dark hangings of a near doorway.

"It's time I told you straight out, my young coxcomb," said Rupert K. Renshawe, with flinty sternness, "that unless your silly ways are much

mended you'll never get any great personal wealth from me."

Gregory folded his arms, drooped his head a little, and looked fixedly at his mother.

"Rupert," she fluttered, "the boy had no idea you were present. Of course he didn't mean——"

"I meant every word," struck in Gregory. He now looked fixedly at his father, though not in the least mildly.

With his father he had undergone hot quarrels in the past. Blows on one side had been threatened if not actually given. There was once a really terrible scene, and it had taught them both the better wisdom of self-control, though Gregory's native share of this quality, far exceeding his father's, had saved the situation from lurid and tragic results.

Renshawe gnawed his lips. "Oh, I don't doubt it, sir. But some day you'll be sorry."

"I'm sorry now," said Gregory, thinking coolly what an ample but majestic person his father appeared, and how well Sargent or Bonnat could touch him up in a portrait, deftly tailored like this, with his gray-dappled beard, shaggy eyebrows and high, curved nose. "I'm sorry that you should seldom meet me without some rude jibe or vexing bit of abuse."

"You alluded to my death, sir, when you said that you expected one day to have great personal wealth."

"Not at all," contradicted Gregory. "There are other ways of getting it."

"You mean marriage, I suppose."

"I made no special allusion to it," said Gregory, with icy repose.

"Now, you must admit that he did not!" Mrs. Renshawe shot in, gliding to her husband's side.

"Oh, I know," rumbled the banker, repelling her outstretched hand. "He told me, once, that if I cut him off he would——"

"Never mind the past, Rupert," his wife pleaded.

But Renshawe went inexorably on.

"He told me that if I cut him off in my will he would find plenty of New York lawyers who would like nothing better than to break it after my death."

"Oh, why drag up old bickerings?" wailed Mrs. Renshawe.

"Good-night," said Gregory, in colorless monotone, and he immediately passed from the drawing-rooms by a rear door.

And then new bickerings began between his parents. After all, Mrs. Renshawe declared to her lord, he treated Gregory with only a little less tyranny than he treated her. She hadn't half enough gowns for Newport in the coming Summer—and her husband worth ten millions, at the very lowest figure! She'd already half decided not to go to Newport at all this year. She'd prowl off to some stagnant little hole, with a sunshade and two small trunks. Only the other day that spiteful hag, Mrs. Whitewright, had smirked to her: "You always look so well in your green gown." Actually she'd worn it seven or eight times that Winter. "Your green gown!" It was too sickening! Everybody would understand why she stayed away from Newport. But she didn't care; she had grown desperate.

Very reluctantly, almost an hour after midnight, she succeeded in wringing a promise from her husband that her allowance should be appreciably increased. "But in six months," he muttered, "you'll be grumbling just the same, and wanting at least a thousand a year more."

Though flushed with victory and feeling how impolitic were her next words, Mrs. Renshawe half-tearfully taunted him: "A thousand a year more! You don't spend half your income; you probably don't spend a third. Why should you go on hoarding? It's too absurd, and it's too melancholy! Just for this once, in the name of common sense, explain, Rupert, explain!"

But he could not explain—or would not. The old curse of Midas was on him. Money had long ago ceased to mean what it could buy. He some-

times had desires to be deep down in the earth, within the walls of some sealed room, with all his possessions turned into gold, and there to plunge his arms in depths of coin, clutch handfuls of them, bathe in them his naked body, feel their myriad chilly little caresses fondle his flesh. But of such longing he was fiercely ashamed, and hid it, like some secret insanity—which, indeed, it was. He could not explain, and so turned away from his wife with a haughty scowl. But just as he was leaving her, Mrs. Renshawe remembered her motive for having awaited him.

"Oh, you said that young Troop came to see you to-day. What is he like?"

"Like?" jeered Renshawe, pausing. "He's like a car conductor, a hotel porter, an Eighth-avenue shopkeeper."

"So bad as that?"

"Worse, if you please."

"And to-day we went to his sisters', Marian and I. They seemed to me horribly coarse. But I admit they're pretty. Still, nobody who is anybody would endure them."

"Money goes a long distance nowadays," her husband replied, "but such a fellow as this Leander Troop might have the income of a million a minute and yet find society at odds with him. Luckily, the season is over, and we're soon going out of town. So all entertainment—even though he's banking with me to a very large extent—needn't be thought of." He was again leaving the room, when he paused once more. "You're going up, I suppose. Shall I turn out these lights?"

"Yes, please."

And while the room grew dimmer and dimmer, till only one light from the outer hall was left to guide them, she heard his voice frigidly continue:

"By the way, I hope you've had time to speak again with Marian, and I hope she's come to her senses regarding a certain matter."

"She hasn't, Rupert. She never will."

With repressed belligerence he answered her through the dimness:

"Very well. Take her this message, please. Usk means to remain here through the Summer. He won't sail till early October. But if she stays obstinate till that time, what I'm now giving her—every penny of it—shall be withdrawn. She can have her room with us, and she can feed at our table, but there it shall end. Perhaps you may feel like clothing her and supplying her with pin-money. I certainly sha'n't."

Mrs. Renshawe made no answer. She had, indeed, none to make. For though far less cruel than Marian's brother, she sympathized rather warmly with his aggrieved and indignant views.

VII

"I've ordered a box at the opera," said Leander, suddenly appearing before his sisters one afternoon three or four days later.

"What kind of a box did you say?" asked Lola, wide-eyed.

"Of course you know," reproved Ernestine; and after a moment Lola did understand, blushing at her own slowness.

"It ain't the regulation time for opera," Leander pursued, "but this is an extra night. I had to give a lot of money for the box, but that don't matter. It's to-morrow night."

"Oh, I'm crazy to hear it!" said Ernestine, fervently. "What's the opera, Lee?"

"I don't know. One of those rigorously Eyetalian names."

"Perhaps it's 'The Bohemian Girl,'" hazarded Lola. "But that ain't Eyetalian, is it? Don't you remember, Erne, how ma used to tell us about 'The Bohemian Girl'? She heard it with pa in 'Frisco, and cried ever so. I hope they won't have anything to make us cry. I hope it'll be something cheerful and funny."

"Lola don't feel very well," said Ernestine, smoothing her sister's lovely, luminous hair.

"Homesick, eh?" smiled Leander. But the smile swiftly faded from his

lips. "Well, girls, I tell ye how it stands with me. I'm homesick, too. It ain't poor ma—no, she's all right. It's about Annie Shelton. I walk round the city, but I don't see a young woman that compares with her. I see 'em better dressed, and all that." He began to roam the room as if it were the city he had just mentioned. "She's only a shoemaker's daughter, but I don't care."

"Why should you care?" flashed Ernestine. "You ought to have asked her, Lee, before you left. You know you ought!"

"Perhaps he did," said Lola. "I hope you did, Lee?"

"No, I didn't. I guess I would, though, if she'd come to the deepow that morning with all the others. But she didn't come to the deepow." Here Leander gloomily lowered his head.

"Write to her, Lee," suggested Lola.

"I dunno if I will or won't," muttered Leander. "But I feel just now as if I'd like her to write to me."

"Ain't that just like a man?" exclaimed Lola to Ernestine, as their brother sauntered into the next room.

The two girls felt weary and depressed. They had taken long drives; they had seen Central Park, and admired it immensely; they had drunk in all the spectacular effects wrought by the Brooklyn Bridge; they had been shown the imposing homes of the principal plutocrats; they had explored Old Trinity, and read some of the epitaphs on its mouldering tombstones; they had craned their necks in wonderment at the most wildly audacious of the sky-scrapers; they had surveyed the lordly up-town boulevards; they had made acquaintance with all that was worth seeing and a great deal that was not, sometimes accompanied by their brother and sometimes alone together.

But they had both felt keenly the bewildering strangeness of their encampment. Loneliness, too, already weighed on them. Such multitudes of people, and not a familiar face! They were both by nature gregarious; and yet isolation stared

at them from every side. As if to aggravate this tedium, scores of letters came with every mail, begging letters, chiefly, but some veiling so ill their mercenary incentives that the effect was a blend of amusement and disgust.

They felt that they ought to return the visits of Mrs. Renshawe and Mrs. Warrender, and yet they shrank from this with a new and mortifying bashfulness. Marian they had both greatly liked. They longed to see her again, and yet were afraid of the fresh light her mere presence would cast on deficiencies in themselves.

These deficiencies they but vaguely discerned; they were ignorant of their own ignorance; its limits eluded them; all their knowledge of the great world, as both had begun half-frightenedly to decide, was blurred and befogged feebleness.

And so, the next afternoon, when Marian's card was brought up to them, they received her in mingled joy and alarm. But they never forgot that second visit. It sounded new notes in their young spirits that forever afterward echoed there.

It was true that Marian had the art of charming in rarest degree. She was one of those women who are really born popular. It was not her beauty, it was not her manner, or the little wavings of her hands when she spoke, the pensive mesmerism of her eyes, the tiny daybreak of her smile, the dimple here, the curve there, the fluty laugh, the mobile eyelids, the sudden seriousness, like shadows over grass; it was all these, and yet it was something more. You could define its elements, but the subtle enticement of their mixture escaped you. To grasp it was to capture a fragrance and stay it with gyves.

Marian found herself, before long, amazed at her own audacities. The girls told her that they were going to the opera that evening, and she was presently asking what frocks they would wear. This brought with it an atmosphere of familiarity in which the girls delighted; it loosened the

stringency of things—their lovely goddess had descended from her cloud.

Hats? Oh, no, Marian assured them, they mustn't think of wearing hats. Nobody did, at the opera—and in a box it would look especially out of place. And their frocks—they wouldn't mind letting her see them?

The frocks were brought, and Marian vehemently shook her head. Oh, no! These dark, heavy silks, high-necked and long-sleeved! Why, the weather had grown quite warm. Hadn't they anything white and thin and fluffy? After a little delay Ernestine returned from another room, rather red-faced, with an armful of somewhat gauzy garments. They were not tumbled, for the girls were good packers, and after Marian had searchingly examined them she declared that they would do.

"But we'll freeze to death," said Lola. She said it with a droll, reverential accent, as though freezing to death wouldn't prove, after all, so dreadful a fate, provided this lovely lady really recommended it.

"Oh, no, you won't. The opera house will be warm, and you'll have your cloaks, of course."

"Cloaks!" Ernestine faltered. "We haven't got any."

"Too bad," Marian mused. Suddenly her face brightened, and she looked at her little gold watch, chequered with diamonds, a gift from her brother after she had emerged from widow's mourning and before the advent of Lord Usk. "I have it, girls." The "girls" charmed them, as it flowed from her lips with earnest naturalness. "There's a large shop not far from here, and it doesn't close till six o'clock. We've quite a while to spare, if we go to it in a cab—one of you, I mean, with me. They have very pretty opera-cloaks there—just of the sort to suit us, ready-made." Then Marian hesitated. "But they're expensive."

"Oh, bother the expense!" said Lola. "You go, Erne, and bring a big wad of bills along with you. Oh,

ain't this lady kind to give herself so much trouble!"

The departure soon took place, and Lola was surprised at the quickness of Marian's and her sister's return. They brought back their purchases with them in the cab. Lola uttered glad cries when these were spread forth. One cloak was white and gold, one white and silver, both triumphs of taste. They had secured some dainty adornments in chiffon, too, and some evening gloves and white shoes, Ernestine knowing well the size of her sister's hand and foot.

"Why, you're just like the fairy godmother in 'Cinderella,'" Lola gleefully said to Marian, longing to put both arms about her neck and kiss one of her delicate cheeks, and wondering if at some time in the very remote future she would enjoy such a privilege.

"Oh, no, I'm not," laughed Marian. "The fairy godmother gave something valuable. I'm only giving a little commonplace advice. And now about your hair," she went on, reflectively. "I suppose you've no jewels. No? Well, never mind; you won't need them. But your hairs are not right," she decided, heedless of the perilous plural. "They must go up—up like mine. Pardon me, but if you wear them so with those cloaks, people will say you look dowdy. This is what I mean—see." She had unpinned her hat, and now displayed an elaborate coiffure, puffed and pyramided into the latest requirement of fashion.

"There are hairdressers whom we could send for, of course," pursued Marian, "but a first trial of one, no matter how skilled he or she may be, is often disappointing. Let me think. Now, do you know? I could play hairdresser for you both if you'd only let me. I've a certain handiness that way; it comes to some women without taking a lesson. And I could save much time for you as well, so that you might dine comfortably before beginning to dress. When I really feel that I can do any-

thing like this, I'm pretty sure to do it quickly. My brother and my sister-in-law are in Newport to-night. They've gone there to look after matters connected with their Summer residence. I sha'n't, therefore, be missed at home. It's quite dreadful, isn't it? for me to ask if I may stop and dine with you! I think you told me that your meals are served privately? All the better, for then you can calculate your time with greater nicety, and hurry off to dress at a minute's notice, or seat yourselves at table in sacques or wrappers. And after I've had my bite and sup with you—which I intend to earn, this time, as pure wages—I can help you to dress; I can put on some of the finishing touches."

Here Marian stopped short, her face wreathed in those smiles that were always the more bewitching because of some graver background across whose starlight their sparkles would seem to flicker. "But if in any way this plan should displease you," she repeated, "pray be quite frank about telling me."

It was only, with both sisters, a question of telling how greatly the plan pleased them. Marian had seen that they had each abundant hair, but when they had unloosened it in a neighboring bedchamber, she was surprised at the length of Ernestine's dusky locks and the flossy fulness of Lola's fair ones.

"Yours will be the harder to do," she informed Lola, "for your hair is curly, dry and a little rebellious. So I'd better begin with you first."

Laughingly the girl gave herself into Marian's hands, while Ernestine, hearing steps in the room they had just quitted, went out to join her brother, and astonish him with an account of the fairy godmother's momentous advent.

VIII

BUT Leander by no means enjoyed her recital. He soon denounced Mar-

ian as a busybody, and shrank in scornful dismay from the prospect of playing escort to a pair of hatless and pale-robed companions. The two new cloaks were lying on a chair, and when Ernestine showed them to him he gave a grim guffaw. Such flummery as that! They'd both look like circus-riders. He'd a good mind not to go at all. Whereupon Ernestine sent him a scathing look, the tragedy of which was not decreased by the sudden detachment of her hastily pinned-up hair. Mrs. Warrender was a perfect angel, and he ought to be ashamed of himself. Instead of feeling grateful to her, he carried on like this. They had often had their quarrels, and they were on the verge of one now. Shame of having Marian overhear them if they lost their tempers alone curbed Ernestine's more militant sallies. A little of the praise that she showered on Marian, her brother had already heard, but now the full tide of it that flowed from her woke in him the most hostile prejudice.

He had passed a very unpleasant afternoon, either roaming the streets or calling on certain old or young men formerly resident in Stratton. All these appeared to him in a new light. This huge, imperious, indifferent city had stamped them with its repelling hall-mark. Once or twice he had suspected that he was being made fun of. They all seemed to him "airy." The entire metropolis addressed him in terms of "airiness." His pride of purse had grown so overweening that he craved obeisance, even servility. He totally failed to understand that his uncouthness made the very fact of his enormous wealth ridiculous. He had yet to learn that he had arrived in a place where thousands of well-bred people would refuse him their acquaintanceship while his manners remained thus piteously unmodified. Then, too, the sweet, reproachful face of Annie Shelton kept haunting heart and brain. Severance from her had set his conscience palpitating with penitent throbs; and yet, while he longed to

write her and confess how every well-garbed young woman whom he met appealed to him only as a mockery of her own demure, native simplicity, the highfalutin self-esteem in which he was steeped kept vetoing so humble an overture.

Presently Lola, all vainglory and ecstasy, came dancing into the room. "Isn't it too perfectly elegant?" she cried, whirling herself about, first before one mirror, then before another. She had always been pretty, but she had never till now seemed pretty in a patrician way. It was wonderful how her coloring, like that of some plump divinity in a fresco, suited its pinkness and pearliness to this unwonted lifting, coiling and puffing of her bright tresses.

Ernestine assured her that she was magnificent, and at once rushed off to be beautified, if possible, in a like manner by Marian's nimble fingers. But the stolid, irreverent look of Leander followed her; and she felt that Lola was destined to take up her own dropped cudgels and wield them against her brother with less restraint than she herself had shown.

While Marian was at work once again, Ernestine thought it best to be prudently confidential. She said pleasant things about her brother, and yet explained that he took strong dislikes, very often, at a moment's notice. Then she dwelt on his aversion to her own and Lola's change of attire. "He's never impolite to ladies, Mrs. Warrender," she gave assurance. "He was always thought gallant and good-natured with 'em at Stratton. But you mustn't be surprised if he behaves a little queer and sulky at dinner." And after this Ernestine ventured on a few revelations concerning Annie Shelton.

Immediately Marian became interested. She did not find it at all hard to extract the whole simple and sad little story. Annie's absence from the station, that morning, struck her as a very proper bit of feminine dignity. How many girls as poor as Ernestine

described her would thus have deported themselves to men so royally moneyed? Lots of girls here in the East, who would treat Annie with high disdain if they met her, might well profit by her modest self-respect. Marian delighted in anything that related to a fine and high love between man and woman. She liked nothing so much as to hear about a genuine passion. She had quickly perceived that Annie loved Leander just for himself. If it had been otherwise, she would have gone to the train that morning. Ambition would have dragged her there. As it was, a bleeding heart must have kept her away.

"I am afraid," she reflected, while the dark strands of Ernestine's heavy but supple hair yielded to her adroit manipulations, "that Leander and I are not going to get on at all well. But I must win him over. I must, and of course I can. No doubt all those horrible things Rupert said of him are true. Still, shocking manners I could forgive. But he has been shamefully shabby to a woman, and for that I feel prepared to hate him. No doubt this dinner will be an ordeal."

It was. Promptly on being introduced to Marian, Leander made up his mind to abominate her. Lola, who had been having what she would have told you was one of her worst fights with him, looked red-eyed and ate little. Ernestine tried to make her brother talk, and wholly failed. Marian, in apparent unconsciousness that he nursed wrath against her, became by degrees more successful. He was forced to answer some of her playful little questions, and she enmeshed him in a trifling argument before he grasped her intent. Then, having realized it, he hated her more than ever, while admitting to himself that she was much prettier than at first she had seemed. The argument concerned men's dress in the large Eastern towns, and before he was aware of its real drift, Marian had gracefully informed him that since

his sisters were going to the opera in full evening gear he should be correspondingly clad; to which Leander replied that he had a dress-coat somewhere in one of his trunks, but he hadn't time to get at it that evening.

"Oh, you've only to ring for one of the hotel servants," Marian said. "He'll unpack everything for you in no time. He'd go and get you a white necktie, too, if you don't happen to have any." She gave, just here, one of her mellow laughs, not loud and not merry, but peculiarly her own. "Pray excuse my saying so, but you'll look very strange, Mr. Troop, beside your sisters, if you're not in evening dress."

Then she glanced at her watch, and nodded to each of the girls. Her grace, as she rose from the table, was not lost on Leander. A willow-bough in a light breeze could not have excelled it. "Just wait until you see your sisters," she called to him across one shoulder, from the doorway. "I'm sure you'll feel immensely proud of them."

Later, when Leander saw them, he certainly was. They were, indeed, two living hints of the splendid and luxurious things that money could accomplish. And this clever fairy godmother, as Lola had called her, was the expeditious author of so telling a masquerade!

Marian, however, secretly despised the results of her own craftsmanship. But she had had so slight an interval in which to exert it, and material even slighter with which to work! Meanwhile, she perceived that Leander was in evening dress. But his tie, though white, was a rumpled failure, and his coat and waistcoat, to put it charitably, were archaic. Moreover, he had on calfskin boots, and he was gloveless. But never mind; he would do—he would have to do.

She went up to his side and murmured a few thankful words to him. From this moment he felt that he couldn't hate her any longer; and concluded, with a sense of fine resig-

nation, that he would hereafter merely dislike her.

"It was so very good of you, Mr. Troop," Marian ended, "to grant my request. If we should ever know each other better—and I hope we shall—I'll remember your kindness all the more gratefully."

When the time of departure came, Marian asked for a seat in the Troop carriage, saying that her home was only a few streets distant, and that they could easily drop her there on their way to the Metropolitan Opera House. Ready assent was, of course, given.

"I'll happen in on you to-morrow afternoon," she said, when the carriage stopped at her brother's house, "and you'll tell me what you thought of the music. May I?"

Ernestine and Lola cried, in a single breath: "Oh, yes, yes; please do!" But Leander, who stood at the carriage door, said nothing. He did not ascend the steps and ring the bell; he did not even touch his hat as Marian slipped away. This kind of courtesy was beyond his ken. And yet, while the wheels rattled himself and his sisters onward to the opera house, a silvery voice kept haunting him: "It was so good of you, Mr. Troop, to grant my request."

Through the noise and dusk Lola suddenly shouted to him: "Now, Lee, you'd better give in. Ain't she too lovely? Come, tell us what you think."

"I think," replied Leander, with oracular gruffness, "that we're very likely to be late." And so they were.

Marian passed indoors with an agreeable sense of privacy. She felt that she had the big house all to herself, for one evening at least. True, Gregory was there, but he seldom joined her or talked with her nowadays. She had once admired him; even, she admired him still. But of late they had not got on together. She conceded his intellect, but she ranked his nature among the spiritual poverties. Its keynote, she had sum-

marized, was egotism, and his mind made her think of a land all appareled in flowers, beautiful to the sight, but without the faintest breath of fragrance, and all rooted in sand.

She went up into her own large, comfortable room, and presently fell to pacing its floor. She had set herself to the performance of a certain task, and one the original purpose of which was indubitably selfish. To-day she had cause to believe that she might sooner or later succeed. She was attempting it—why? Oh, let there be no self-concealments! Her motive was to escape from her stepbrother's despotism. He had sent her that hideous message. Whether he really meant it or not, she had conceived a design of ridding herself forever from any menaces of the same tormenting kind. Possibly she was only fighting the air. But she would soon know if this were true. And, whatever rebuff came, she could always pride herself on having played no hypocritical game. It should be cards on the table. Her course would have no crafty sinuosities. She wished that she might speak out to-morrow. But it would not be many to-morrows before the Troops either took her terms or rejected them.

When, in the midst of these contemplations, a knock came and a card followed, she felt harshly disturbed. Effort had tired her, and she had intended soon to seek her bed. But it was still early, and she swiftly guessed that Lord Usk had chosen this night visit because of a certainty that no interruptions might occur. The "evening call" was now as old-fashioned as South Fifth avenue or Bleecker street. Perhaps her brother had advised it before leaving town. Usk might have come for a final answer. However, he had come for so many final answers, and had received so many, while she poured him tea of an afternoon or met him at crushes, nocturnal and the reverse, why should he seek to make himself the recipient of still one more? Marian went down-stairs to meet him, in a mood at once weary and indignant.

"Brighten up the front drawing-

room," she said to the servant who preceded her, and deliberately waited until she felt sure this order had been obeyed.

He approached her promptly, with outstretched hand. Into this hand she put her own for the briefest instant.

"You think it strange?" he asked.

"What?" she asked back, blankly.

"Oh, this sort of a coming."

"It is odd." She sank into the nearest chair, and he seated himself at her side, closer than she wished.

"But I wanted to find you alone," he explained, with an air of brooding mildness.

He was a tall, thin man, with an auburn mustache and a look in his lean face as if winds and suns had swept and tanned it. His small eyes were a lucid drab, with dead-black lashes. He had long, slender, sinewy hands and long, calfless legs. He was very well-dressed at all times, and his hard, spare body was of the sort that the fashions of our period specially suit.

"Of course, you know why I wanted to find you alone," he continued.

He sat loungingly, his slim body—with its waist like a woman's—pushed toward her, his legs crossed, and both hands, tipped with their glossy, filbert nails, fumbling at his thready watch-chain.

"Oh, I suppose I know why," Marian tossed off, with a bored kind of civility. She liked his society as much as that of any man she knew, provided he would avoid one topic. He had intellect, great knowledge of women, a tint of languid, yet clear wit in his talk and a good deal of solid mental culture. His familiarity with a world round which he had traveled twice would now and then crop out with striking vividness.

"You think I mean to put the old question, Marian," he said. "Well, I do."

"It's quite idle."

"You're still marble, then?"

"Oh, I'm common clay."

"That's encouraging; clay may be softened."

"Not in my case." She gave him a

brief, direct look, and in her beautiful eyes and sensitive lips arraignment and entreaty were equally blent. "I've told you so often that I will never, never marry again. I haven't much faith, as you're aware. Sometimes I have absolutely none. But often, usually in the dead of night, Arthur seems to come and hold my hand. He seemed to come like that last night. The room was pitch-dark. Just for a second I believed that he really was there. 'Be firm,' the silence itself said to me. I wasn't afraid; I longed for a light, however faint, and a presence, however vague. Then the whole feeling vanished. But, if I had not had it, I should not have felt any less firm to-day. I am always firm; I never waver. You call it morbid; so does my brother. I can't help what you call it——"

"You don't care," he said, in tones loaded with rebuke.

"It is not possible for me to care."

"Because you do not love me? Because you are waiting?"

She gave an exasperated little smile. "How often have you said that? It is horribly rude of you to say it again. Hundreds of women would be very angry. For that matter, I am angry——"

"No; you're not angry, for you can't help being pitiful. And why? You are certain that I'm in love with you."

"I—I do believe you," she said, staring at the lap of her gown and making nervously with her fingers a few zigzag creases there. Then, on a sudden, she raised her eyes and drove their rays daringly into his own. "Granted you like me very much, granted you're very much in love, and all that, but you would not marry me without a *dot* from my brother. You want me, Lord Usk, but you want that to go with me. I'm inflexible about your getting me on any terms. Nevertheless, though you have money yourself, perhaps a very great deal of it, you're bent on winning more when you win me."

She saw his face cloud, and the

teeth flash between his parted lips. But she went straight on.

"I don't blame you. It's your national way. My brother has made you a large offer—oh, you needn't lift your hand in protest; I'm very certain that he has done so. I'm to be pauperized if I don't accept you before the Autumn. I won't accept you, I won't accept any man; so you'll have neither the dame nor the dower. You must do without both, and if you care to sit here and talk of things that do not concern your marrying me, I'm quite acquiescent. Otherwise, with no really discourteous intentions, I must beg of you to take the only alternative left."

"With no 'discourteous intentions'! You heap insult on me while applauding your own politeness!"

"How can you call it insult? I've never spoken to you before of any understanding between Rupert and yourself. But I am confident that he has made you pecuniary promises. Why? Because I know him, and I know you. Come, now; are you prepared to give me your word of honor that I am wrong?"

Lord Usk rose. She saw that he was greatly agitated, but she did not think that wrath was by any means all the cause of his disarray. Her sheer boldness had checkmated him. She watched his slow walk toward the door, and wondered if he would cross the threshold without any pause before reaching it.

He did pause. "You have chosen a clever way of giving me my final dismissal."

But she was instantly his match. "I gave it you, in that sense, months ago. You never could have married me, but it isn't pleasant to hear that you tried to buy me with your titles."

"Have I admitted that?" he queried, with fierceness, turning on her.

"Yes."

"How?"

"By your inability to state that you haven't bargained for me with my brother."

He drew out a handkerchief from

his shirt-cuff, and crushed its folds against his lips.

"Inability? You call silence inability?"

"Yes."

"Is not that most arbitrary?"

"No, no; not in the least. You would rush to a denial if you could. But you can't, for my charge is a true charge."

Quite composed, considerably bored, she sat awaiting his answer. It soon came: his lordship of Usk and Casilear left the house.

IX

Nor only the next day did Marian drop in on the Troops, but many a day afterward she sought them, through the witching weather that for once, at least, blessed New York with a really vernal May.

Wondrous were the changes that she wrought, and with no seeming strain; there lay the marvel of her wizardry. Counsel flowed from her with so deft an accompaniment of amusing discourse that, even if the girls had felt inclined to resent being lessoned, they could not have denied their instructor's engaging method. But, as it was, they took her slightest suggestion on trust, enchantedly. She gave free rein to all her powers of fascination.

And yet she made them certain that no duplicity underlay her halcyon mood of mentorship. They swiftly began to adore her for this very reason; they felt that she rang true. Now and then it occurred to them that she had some sort of confession to utter, some sort of interpreting story to tell. But they were patient, often carelessly so. It was of course peculiar, as Leander would sometimes grumble, that so modish and aristocratic a lady should give them such a large share of her leisure. But he, too, was now definitely under the spell; his complaints and suspicions were becoming dulled by its influence. He thought less of what she might be "up to," and more of the sweet captivations that she exerted.

He did not see her, by any means, as often as did his sisters; he was sensible, notwithstanding, of a force brought to bear on him—a new force, full of subtle suasions. With astonishment he watched his sisters yield to it. And yet there was nothing remarkable in their rapid acceptance. It was what we have now grown to call an old tale—the exceptional teachableness of the young American woman. Both the girls, for example, would sometimes, at table, make their knives do the duty of forks. Marian, with a tact all her own, soon banished this habit into the dustbins of perpetual exile. Other fatal little foes of taste soon followed the path of this greater one. Reckless trips and slips in grammar she weeded from their speech with an expedition that surprised herself, forgetting that her own personality supplied a constant model, an objective aid, that consorted admirably with the oral precept.

Though not realizing it, she had established a kind of miniature kindergarten; for these two gladly subservient pupils, despite the youth of their gentle taskmistress, were not seldom placed toward her in attitudes of childish reciprocity.

A revolution in dress was speedily completed. Two maids of the most trustworthy character, at wages that Marian insisted should not exceed their previous payment from mistresses less wealthy, were engaged and set at work. The girls still measurably retained their Western vocal "burr," but, again, it surprised their vigilant friend that so much nasal harshness should so soon have become softened.

"You go there all the time," said Mrs. Renshaw one day. "Rupert is asking why, as a matter of course. I suppose you know that we leave for Newport early in June. That isn't far off. Rupert is very angry with you, Marian. But he hasn't given you up."

"Given me up, Kate?"

"Oh, you understand, my dear. Lord Usk will spend a week or two with us in June. He, too, is very angry with you. I hope you haven't cut him. He tells your brother, and Greg-

ory also, that you were quite dreadful to him on a certain evening when he called."

"I told him the truth," said Marian. "If he thought that dreadful, I can't help it."

Just then Gregory came lounging into the room. "How are your flock of sheep, my shepherdess aunt?" he inquired, saucily merry. "Oh, don't deny that you have one, there at the Waldorf-Astoria. Dear old Usk wants to see it, and so do I. Why can't we lunch or dine with your Troops, just once, as you do almost every day? We'd both promise to be very nice. Usk and I saw you yesterday driving with the girls, but you pretended you didn't see us. They're really quite pretty. I almost fell in love with the blonde one. You've been wonderful. They never got those delightful togs out on the Pacific slope. And what a taste you have, auntie, in hats! But I didn't dream you could achieve such miracles with horse-flesh. Usk says those two roans, going along like cats, trained to perfection, with their superb heads and legs, must have cost a thousand apiece; and Usk, like most Englishmen of his class, is an authority on horses, as you know. Then the trappings, too—the livery and all that—we agreed that they were positively ducal. One thought of Hyde Park at half-after six on a June evening."

"Mr. Troop," said Marian, "knows a great deal about horses."

"Oh, does he?" Gregory gave a loud laugh; his laughter was always musical. "But not that kind, if you please. They don't largely congregate on the other side of the Rockies. And the coachman and footman—twin Apollos, visibly beloved, if you'll pardon my shameless pun, of the British Mews! Such a creation from the brain of Leander Troop—never! You may have got somebody to spend his dollars with such sublime tact, or you may have spent them so yourself. But the young man who offered father—as I heard—a seventy-five-cent cigar, and referred flatteringly to our fine mansion on Seventh

avenue! Grapes don't grow from thistles, auntie, with quite so startling a speed. Money may have its necromancies, but they're not quite so lightning-like."

"Use your common sense, Gregory," said his kinswoman. "I could no more have selected that whole equipage for Mr. Troop than I could have cut one of his new coats. You may not meet him at any of your smart clubs, but he has got to know certain men of a rather sporting turn. I did see, in company with one of his sisters, the carriage and the horses before they were put together. I was asked about the livery, too, and even the harness. But I attempted to pass no final judgments, and if my suggestions were heeded in the way of ultimate choice it must have been because Miss Troop valued them, and hence influenced her brother in their adoption. The godlike coachman and footman were no doubt lucky accidents. I had observed them as two clean-shaven men of good appearance, but escaped your enthusiasm, nevertheless."

Gregory slapped one hand against the other, in soundless applause. "Deliciously non-committal auntie! The Sphinx was imprudent compared with you. And shall we never solve the problem of your mysterious cult? I'm so tired of groping in darkness. I feel like pleading to you, on my knees and *à bras ouverts*, for a feeble gleam of light. Poor Usk slowly perishes with jealousy. But, alas! of whom to be jealous he doesn't yet discern; nor do I; nor does mamma, yonder. We've all known your sympathies with the poor. But the rich—the stupendously rich, at that! Of course a diamond-mine wouldn't make you stoop to the young man with the seventy-five-cent cigars. And yet stranger things have happened, one must concede."

"Be quiet, Gregory," said his mother, as a wounded look crossed Marian's face. Then she tried to deflect a little the current of talk. "Your father has seen Leander Troop

twice again, and is surprised at his altered manners. He has grown very much less—barbaric. He has more the air of his father, who at times, they say, came very near being an actual gentleman, though a man so thoroughly self-made."

"Self-made men always bore me," said Gregory. "One feels that in making themselves they have been so handicapped by inexperience."

That evening Marian was to dine with the Troops at their hotel, and she had already told herself that she needed all her nerve, since a certain prelude must end forthwith. The real drama would follow it or not, as fate decreed. People had begun to gossip about her intimacy with these Troops—what could it possibly mean? Mrs. Renshawe had repeated spiteful and ironic remarks. Gregory's riant reference to Leander as a potential key of the whole baffling secret had been a mere shadow of popular comment. And yet everybody knew that Lord Usk would fall at her feet in a twinkling. This fact had made gossip divide itself.

Now you heard that she had decided against an English title in favor of huge wealth without one. Again you heard hot denial that she would ever marry an oafish young capitalist for his money alone. But Marian hated to let the fogs of enigma roll up their blinding volumes. She wanted to have this one evening clear off the atmosphere of her intention—as might a violent thunderstorm. If it did not—well, if it did not, then destiny was against her. But the hour had struck, and she steadied herself at its commanding summons.

All through dinner Leander and his sisters felt conscious that she was not exactly her usual self. Toward the end of it Ernestine, assured that she had grown paler, and mindful that she had eaten but slightly, asked her if she were tired.

"Tired? Oh, no! But I expect to be soon."

The strangeness of this answer provoked a natural surprise. Marian waited till the servants had gone, and then said, looking all about her, from face to face:

"I'm sure you thought my answer to Ernestine rather an odd one."

"I did," said Lola.

"And I," said Ernestine.

"You expect soon to be tired?" Leander questioned. "How, Mrs. Warrender?"

Marian played for a moment with her small coffee-spoon. "Confessions are fatiguing," she slowly returned. "At least, mine will be. And I mean to make one. You'll see why, perhaps, when I've finished it."

No one replied. Three pairs of eyes were intently watching her. After a brief while she rose from the table, and seated herself in a somewhat shadowed chair. When she again spoke, both hands lay curled quite idly in her lap; but the fluent lines of her figure had relaxed in an un wonted way, and seemed to symbolize deep eagerness and resolve.

"It's very hard to begin. But I'll make my plunge. I liked you girls when I came that day with Kate—Mrs. Renshawe, you know. I liked you, but the idea of what I wanted to do—to get from you the sanction of doing—hadn't yet entered my mind. That came later, though not much. I want to be absolutely sincere. It was not a generous impulse; it was rather a self-preservative one.

"'Here,' I said to myself, 'is my chance, or at least my possible chance.' But the more I have seen you, Ernestine and Lola, the more I have got to feel that our close companionship would prove to me, simply in itself, a great refreshment and pleasure. There is much that I could teach you and show you. It is not vain for me to say this, and I would not say it if I thought that either of you would think it vain. I am certain that neither of you will. I am not, pray remember, even hinting that

I could better you in the faintest moral sense—for in the strongest, sweetest sense you are both good and pure; you are both far above the world that fortune compels you to face. But in many ways you are not fitted to face this world; I should indeed state plainly that you have not the weapons with which to fight it. These I cannot supply through myself, but I can do something appreciable, and I can point to others whose tutelage, under my supervision, would be of striking help. For two years—longer, if you wish—I would remain your constant associate and adviser. Perhaps I am not wrong in believing that you have already grown to trust me."

Here her voice fell, and with it her eyes. "We trust you like a sister!" Ernestine said, very fervently; and Lola gave instant echo: "Like a sister—yes!"

Marian, lifting her gaze, fixed it on Leander, who watched her with an intentness unexpectedly keen.

She went on, with no visible attempt to nerve herself, though at this point in what she had chosen to call her confession the fear of breakdown was secretly tormenting her.

"I've said that my impulse was not a generous one. I've said that it was self-preservative. Let me now tell why. Not so long ago, when I was quite young, I met and loved my dead husband, Arthur Warrender. He was thought a good match, as the phrase runs, by my stepbrother, Mr. Renshawe, and by many others besides. He was only two years older than I; he was handsome, well-born, rich. When I learned that he cared for me, the sun seemed to dance in the sky. And it didn't stop dancing after marriage—as so often it does. I was very happy with Arthur. It lasted only two years, but it was perfect! One of those years we spent abroad. For six months of it we were in Italy. But we hardly ever went into society. We chose lonely but lovely places—a

villa on the Italian Riviera, another at Vallombrosa overlooking Florence, another still— But no matter; we were sufficient unto ourselves.

"When we came back here it was the same. People laughed at us, and asked if our honeymoon was never going to end. Nothing ever ended it—nothing, I am sure, ever could have ended it—except death. And—very suddenly—for he was in perfect health almost till the very last—death did!"

Marian paused, now. Ernestine and Lola were both in tears, the latter quite audibly. Marian looked at the sisters with a bright, pained, affectionate smile, that seemed somehow to envy them their tears. Her own eyes glittered with a dry light. She had often longed to weep for the irremediable. But all that was long over. She would indeed have broken down to-night were it not.

"I—I was very ill for several months afterward. But when Nature had so far healed my wound that it ached much less maddeningly, I had to confront a grim fact. Perhaps you remember the great and totally unforeseen failure of Dunstan & Strallman. Arthur had been a silent partner in this wide-known firm of bankers. He had inherited the position, so to speak, from his father. And in the ruin every dime of his wealth was swallowed up. Before my marriage I had been supported by my brother. Now again I was thrown on his care. For a time all went well enough. Then the question of my second marriage rose."

"Second marriage?"

The words were so low that Marian was not at first aware who spoke them. Then it dawned on her that Leander had done so; and she perceived, moreover, that the very lines of his head and shoulders appeared now to listen alertly.

"I say that this question rose. But I gave it immediate rebuff. Someone has wished me for his wife—I will mention no name. He still perseveres; my brother is on his side,

my sister-in-law as well. I have not quarreled with Mr. Renshawe; he, rather, has quarreled with me. For he is bent, most determinedly bent, on my making this marriage. He has gone so far as to threaten me, and the threat is shockingly cruel. Unless I agree to follow his inclinations by the end of this Summer, he will simply permit me to live in his house, and that will be all. The allowance he gives me will cease from that time. My position, of course, will become pitiable; it will also become grotesque. My parents died years ago, and I have now no near relations, except Rupert. His wife will behave mercifully, I haven't a doubt; but her private purse already fails to meet the requirements of a very luxurious life, and she is constantly complaining, as it is, to a husband who was never liberal, and whose increased wealth has not made him a whit more lavish. One decision is terribly strong with me. The worst poverty, starvation itself, will never force me to marry again. I have been called sentimentally, sensationally stubborn. It doesn't matter. I can't explain, and I don't blame anyone for misjudgments of my course. How can others feel as I do? Their points of view are clear to me—quite pardonably clear. Mine is to them almost inevitably vague. I speak of the worst poverty—after all, that may never come. There are things I can do, places I can fill, so long as luck spares my health. And then I shall have a home, a roof over my head, while I think, plot and plan. But for some time an idea has haunted me that means of actual future independence are already within my reach."

Then, before Marian could speak another word, the impulsive Lola had sprung to her side. "Oh, I guess what you're going to say! You'll come and live with us! Ain't that—I mean, isn't that—too perfectly grand!"

Ernestine had followed her sister, more slowly, but with glowing face.

Lola's last rapturous outburst was addressed to her.

"If it's only true!" she said.

"It's for you—for all three of you—to settle that," Marian answered. She colored slightly as she met Leander's eyes. "For now comes the hard, hateful business part of my queer harangue."

Here Leander rose. "You needn't say it out if it bothers you," he proposed.

Never had she heard his voice so softened. For some time past she had noticed the gradual ebbing away of his boastful manner. But this was almost like a new Leander, speaking and moving. Just for a moment the illusion lasted, and then the old crispness and curtness returned. Yet somehow they were veiled, as though dimness should fall on a canvas too crude of tint—as though refinement had begun covertly to replace his former swaggering vehemence.

"There's a small writing-desk in that corner," he now continued. "I'll just turn on the electric light that's above it." He achieved this result in another moment. "You'll find paper, pens, pencil—all you may need—right here, Mrs. Warrender. Perhaps you'd like to make two or three short statements—about terms, I mean. Don't take any pains. Just scribble it off anyhow. Then I'll glance at it, you know."

Marian threw him a grateful glance, and murmured, "Thanks."

Her writing did not take a long while. She had everything cleanly calculated in her mind. She had meant to ask a large sum, but not any wildly exorbitant one. A part of it was to be paid her each month. At the end of two years she would have saved enough to rent herself a little house not far from town, and live modestly but securely for the rest of her life. But she would still stay on, if they wished.

Having finished, she handed her sheet of paper to Leander. He studied it for a little while.

"It won't do," he said.

Marian felt herself crimson.

"Lee!" cried Lola, indignantly.

"How won't it do?" demanded Ernestine.

"It's too small," said Leander.

"It's got to be doubled."

"Of course it has, if Lee says so!" declared Lola, trying to look very sage.

Marian's hand went tremulously to her throat. "No, no," she said, in rather husky tones. "That would be like—imposition. I—could—not take so much! I—could—not come and live with you at all, unless you gave me that—only that—no more!"

Her face was full of sweetness, but into her voice had crept an accent of decision, tender and yet firm.

For the first time she saw Leander look really abashed. Suddenly leaving her seat, she went up to him and gave him her hand.

"I thank you so very much, and I beg you to pardon me."

Leander twisted one end of his mustache with great violence. "Why, there's nothing to pardon," he said. "How could there be?"

"There's everything to feel joyful for!" exclaimed Ernestine. She caught Lola in her arms, and they whirled about together, using the waltz-step that Marian had lately taught them.

X

MRS. RENSHAW turned pale when the truth was told her. "To accept a position like that when one could call one's self the Countess of Usk and Casilear! You must be in earnest! But you know, my dear, what the world will say—that you prefer matrimonial millions to old English birth."

Marian frowned for a second, then laughed. "You mean Leander? It's too ludicrous! I shall slip quietly away this afternoon, Kate. I've only one message for Rupert—a brief one, too. He has been cruel, but I bear him no grudge."

Afterward she spoke of certain possessions for which she would send, and

begged her sister-in-law to remember that she hoped their friendship would remain warm in the future, as in the past.

To her surprise, Mrs. Renshawe completely gave way. She embraced Marian again and again. She grew tumultuous in her emotion; tears poured from her eyes, whence many a cold and haughty stare was wont to emerge.

"It was so like you to refuse that second offer they made you! Of course, they've won a grand prize, and know it. I shall never cease to miss you. I love you dearly, and I feel Rupert's brutishness with a new, fearful force. He deserves this punishment. With all his wealth, your real friends are twenty to his one. It's the same with me. You held our home together. You were the bond of it, and the star of it as well."

That night, when her husband came back to find Marian gone, he found something else very vividly present. His wife's wrath he had seen before; but now fresh vials of it were broken. To her passionate upbraidings and reproaches he made scarcely any response. He was too stunned.

Quite soon after Marian's installation as governess in the Troop household, she went with Leander and his sisters on a long Northern tour that lasted several weeks. They saw Niagara and all the Great Lakes, traveling sumptuously, not seldom in private cars that Leander, as his father's son, was at times offered by politic officials.

Marian's heartbeats often quickened as she observed the pathetic way in which Ernestine and Lola clung to her. Their fondness deepened as their own dependence on her tactful counsels became more sensible to themselves. They would imitate, with a sort of reverential comedy, her gestures, her voice, her phrases, her very mode of crossing a room or entering it. Then, at whiles, they would break into laughter—far less boisterous than of old—and accuse each other of this admiring mimicry.

To all whom they met—and many people thrust acquaintance on them—

Marian insisted that they should introduce her as "our governess." She even asked of Leander that he should employ the longer formula of "my sisters' governess"; but now and then she caught him disobeying her and saying simply, "Mrs. Warrender."

Some little time before the tour had ended she began to feel certain vague qualms of concern regarding Leander. At this stopping-place or that, on the boats or cars in which they were forced to spend long intervals, a legion of women, having discovered who he was, were pleased to beam on him, to make eyes at him. His indifference appealed to her, for a time, as amusingly phlegmatic. Then there came into her mind a shadow of disquieting doubt.

Later they held together more than a single private talk. His colloquialism lapsed, one day, into a confidential channel. He referred to Annie Shelton, of whom his listener had already learned. This drew from Marian the irrepressible questions: Did he love Annie, and did conscience really smite him for having left her without an offer of marriage?

In answering these questions Leander palpably hung fire. It occurred to Marian that he wished to elicit from her sympathy rather than advice. She was prepared to give him a slight yet humane share of the first, and as much of the last as he would accept. The girls had made it very clear to her just how good and intelligent a girl Annie Shelton was.

But Leander's approaches quickly disturbed their recipient. They did not flavor enough of penitence. He had sought to speak of Annie Shelton one minute; the next it grew apparent that he had meant to use her as a kind of bridge. Inwardly recoiling, Marian feared whither this bridge might lead. Why should it not lead into just that domain of sentiment and flirtation that she had neither intention nor desire to explore? Rapidly she saw the structure built; as rapidly she determined to destroy it. And yet there must be no sharp strokes. Her place

forbade that. Since her husband's death she had had to fight the same sort of fight more times than she cared to remember. Men had been persistent in spite of her chidings; Lord Usk, though an obstinate wooer, had scarcely ranked among the most passionate. Occasionally she had seemed to herself brutal. It would not do to take such measures now. She did not take them. She parried, while guarding against actual repulsion. Her own dexterity surprised her. It told at last, and she was left to pray that it would tell with permanence.

On their return to New York there broke out a little breeze of contest in her relations with Leander that would otherwise have distressed her. Now it brought relief. It might put them on a different footing, she reflected; it might even tear asunder that span-gled gauze of romanticism in which he had seemed on the verge of investing her.

Toward her two charges it was her fixed aim to act with duty and discipline, however mildly each was administered. Every week, for example, she required that one of them should write home to her mother in Stratton, and these letters were made a medium by which apt epistolary skill could be attained.

When they found themselves once more in the Waldorf-Astoria, it was past the middle of June, and extremely hot. Leander affirmed himself sick of hotels, and proposed that they should at once procure as large and handsome a residence as the lateness of the season would permit them to secure, in that seaside resort which both he and his sisters regarded as a social paradise.

"Newport?" said Marian. "Oh, no; pray don't think of going there."

The girls looked promptly acquiescent. Whatever Marian objected to must somehow be objectionable. Like all converts to a faith, they were ultra-ardent believers.

But Leander gave a dissentient start. "Not go there at all? Oh, that won't do."

"I'm sorry you feel it won't," said Marian.

Several hours later he chanced to meet her while alone. She was tired, and told him so. She had been searching about town this hot day for a capable French instructress; it was her aim that a French lady should give the girls a great deal of her company; but Marian knew just the kind of person who would suit her—one of the best breeding, not too assertive, not apt to clash with her own views and intents. This person she had yet failed to find, and a morrow of wearisome search loomed before her.

"So you've put down your foot on the subject of Newport," said Leander. "Why?"

She was unbuttoning one of her gloves, and stopped short in the process. "I've not put down my foot. I've no right to do it. You're master here, not I. No doubt I spoke too abruptly. If so, forgive me. But I did not wish to speak commandingly. The truth is merely this: neither Ernestine nor Lola is yet—ready for Newport."

"Ready?" he repeated, with a trace of challenge.

"Does 'prepared' sound softer? Let me be practical. You would get one of the handsome cottages, as they call their mansions. You would drive abroad. You might be asked to one or two of the Casino parties. But none of the right people would call on you. Ah, you smile at my terming them the right people. But I simply mean those who are Newport—those who have the vantage there, who make it the nest of exclusiveness and snobbery that it is.

"If you want to pass a season there you must always remember that it stands for everything American life—democratic life—republican life—ought not to be. It is a boiling-point of hypocrisy, frivolity, social cruelty—but it is refined. It worships money, but it will not endure money spent without taste. Personally, I detest Newport, for it is a living nega-

tion of all the true charity and self-respect that should make human nature wholesome and human intercourse fine. Still, as a mere school of outward elegance it is worth attention. I should like the girls, at some future day, to form their own estimate of it. But it breaks my heart to think of their going there now and seeing only its insolent, arrogant, seamy side. I want them to wait. It would be a fatal error if they did not."

"But, helped by you——?"

"I could not help them. I know the stiffest-necked grandees; I'm not unpopular with them. But my position there, as guardian and directress, would be terrible. The girls—I come back to my old word—are not ready. In another year it should be quite different."

"Too much Stratton left, I suppose," said Leander, walking toward a window and staring down at the diminished vehicles and dwarfed pedestrians.

"Put it that way, if you please."

Leander veered round. He had two valets now, and was dressed by a tailor whom large bills had stimulated into large efforts. "And how about myself?" he asked.

"You're a man. It isn't the same. You'd have your yacht and your traps. They might think—you force my candor—that there was too much Stratton left in you, but this would be said only behind your back; and unless you should err too boldly against their usages, they would send you their cards of invitation—even instruct their daughters to treat you most civilly."

"And I never saw one of 'em that I'd shake a stick at!" burst from Leander, in quite his early manner. Then, much lower of tone, he added: "Except you." He paused a moment, then gravely continued: "I almost hated even you, at first—I can say it now—till I—well, till I got so to like you."

Before the end of June Marian had her way. Just what she had de-

signed to do she thoroughly carried out. They rented a charming villa in a beautiful seaside place on the New England coast, which we will call Shaftesbury. Already admirably furnished, it lacked a few artistic touches, and these were easily bestowed. Its lawns, dotted with huge hemlocks, flowed down to a craggy rampart that fierce Atlantic storms had lashed through many a Winter, as its fringing bosks of cedar showed plainly among their twisted trunks. The little neighboring village possessed a good harbor, which Leander, though a life-long landsman, had soon invaded with a steam-yacht of grace and girth.

Marian had meanwhile engaged precisely the sort of French governess she had seen in her visions—an elderly lady with just enough self-effacement to escape tedious humility, and speaking her native tongue as purely as she spoke English ill.

Shaftesbury was not a fashionable resort, yet by no means was it dowdy. Its chief rural hotel, rather clumsily named the Turtle Point House, was filled, each year, with quiet gentlefolk, and the villas along a mile or two of coast were mainly occupied by Boston or New York families, with a few of whom Marian found she was already acquainted. She was convinced that in her selection of Shaftesbury she had struck just the right note of semi-retirement.

The cottagers whom she had formerly known came to visit Marian. The girls, at these times, always appeared. They were judged leniently, and soon Marian congratulated herself on the lessening need for indulgence that their marked improvement revealed. Here, as would not have happened at Newport, they were neither stricken dumb with abashment nor afflicted by heart-aches from wounded pride. Society did not stare at them through a long-handled eye-glass over a frigid shoulder. It gave them a cordial hand, asked them to some of its unpretentious gatherings, and con-

cealed its criticisms, whether caustic or mirthful, behind amical smiles.

Leander would be absent on his yacht, in which he delighted, for three or four days at a time. He was seldom alone, for on his shorter cruises Marian and his sisters would often accompany him, and soon other guests were included. Once or twice he went as far as Newport with a little party of gentlemen, to most of whom Marian had introduced him. He was away like this, one evening, when a strange event occurred.

It was chilly out of doors, and Marian sat in the drawing-room, brooding over the usual little talk of a sagacious, instructive, yet non-perfunctory character, which she held with her wards nearly every day. Lola and Ernestine were both up-stairs, but she expected them to join her at almost any moment. Suddenly Gregory Renshawe entered.

His presence shocked Marian, but she greeted him pleasantly. "I thought you never came to Shaftesbury," she said.

"Oh, I've been here lots of times," Gregory fibbed, airily. "There's an effect of some cedars growing from a cleft in a rock, streaked with purple and white, that I've longed to paint, and have repeatedly sketched. Of course mamma told me you were here. I'm stopping at the Turtle Point. Delightful place—everything so well *ménagé*. Heaven knows I need a valet; but poor Emile had to go.

"I suppose you've heard about father's latest thunderbolt. He's been in the most horrible humor ever since you left us, dear auntie. I'm cut down lower than ever before. Two hundred and fifty a month—think of it! This is what he calls his ultimatum. I must either sit on a high stool and pore over a ledger six hours a day, or wallow in poverty like this! But don't think I've come down here to borrow of you, auntie. Oh, no; mamma gives me a little out of her private purse. Why didn't Shakespeare tell us how sharper

than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless father? As if he oughtn't to be proud of my artistic promise and intentions!"

Here Gregory heaved a sigh, and plunged one white, shapely hand through his Byronic curls. "Ah, why can't we all have such splendid revenges as yours? You've nearly given the governor an apoplexy with your superb back-handed blow. I don't doubt you're going to do marvels with the two protégées. Mamma thinks you will, and so do I. And somebody else is sure of it. I mean Usk. Do you know, he was kind enough to come with me here? Newport bores him, this Summer, he says. Oh, don't flush up like that. He isn't going to bother you any more. He was quite *abasourdi* by the step you took. I positively feared some sort of brain attack. Those placid men, who'd as soon wear their hearts on their sleeves as a pot-hat with a frock-coat, are just the ones liable to mental explosion. But all that sort of thing is past now with Usk. I hope you'll be nice to him when you meet, for of course he'll happen in if you let him. He's sure to try, whether I bring him or not. And isn't it just as well your girls should get a premonitory glimpse of so high-bred a fellow? He'll teach them unconsciously what's the real distinguished thing. His presence alone would be a sort of lesson, in its way. No man understands more drastically the whole business of conventions, niceties, aptitudes. I've heard you confess it yourself. He has all the *chatteries salonnieres* at his finger-ends. But he isn't going to be here long. Indeed, he talks of sailing back some time in August, now. I hope you appreciate, auntie, my pregnant little 'now.' But we won't discuss painful topics. We'll discuss *la brune* Ernestine and *la blonde* Lola. Where are they? Not in their cribs, I hope, at this wildly early hour!"

They soon gave physical proof that they were not in their cribs. Gregory stayed till past eleven, and it was

manifest to Marian that he amused them greatly. She was not pleased at his arrival in Shaftesbury, and as day followed day each became to her like a new link in a chain of troubles. Lord Usk presented himself at the villa, and though his reserved bearing gave no sign that Gregory had not described truthfully his altered frame of mind, she still nursed her doubts regarding his real motives for having accompanied her nephew. She armed herself against new pressure of his suit, but found in his tranquil courtesies no faintest reason for thus standing on guard. He sought no private conversations with her, and, indeed, seemed to select Ernestine as an object of half-paternal pleasantries. But he was so very subtle, and withal had shown himself so unflinchingly determined in former days! Why had he drifted here unless beneath the sway of some secret and impenetrable purpose?

As if to weight Marian's anxiety more heavily, Leander, returning from his last cruise, almost at once struck up an intimacy with Gregory and his lordship. Beyond a doubt, she concluded, he was encouraged by their cordial treatment. There was much in Leander to like; but did Lord Usk or her nephew perceive it? Was he the kind of associate they would have chosen spontaneously? She noticed that each, in his different way, paid a certain court to the young Croesus. Paying court to anybody, except herself, was so completely out of Usk's line! And Gregory—did he ever deign more than a nod to those whom he thought unamusing? For hours at a time she would put, so to speak, two and two together. Obviously, Gregory was bending himself to the task of fascination, with Lola for its object. Despite her prettiness, was she a girl naturally to please his fancy? How could she understand his picturesque attitudinizings, his panoramic vagaries? And yet these often made her smile, even sometimes to laugh, very heartily.

"Usk," Marian would fretfully muse,

"is only trifling with Ernestine, of course; and I can scarcely be accused of vanity when I assume that he has held some new sort of provocative confab with Rupert regarding myself.

"But what if the girl should become interested in him? I won't have it! I won't have it! These yachting parties, in which the conquered and mollified Lee plays propriety, whether I go or not, these walks on the shore, these evenings passed in shadowy nooks of the big piazza—I won't endure it, and the whole affair must speedily cease. But how? how? Usk wanted me, with the money thrown in. He shall not get Ernestine, if that, after all, be his aim. As for Gregory and Lola, I scent less danger there, but with them, too, the situation is threatening."

Once she sat by the starlit window of her own darkened room, and clenched her hands and longed to shriek aloud. That her earnest effort should end in this absurd fiasco! Horrible! horrible! Of all men calling themselves gentlemen, these were the last she would have chosen! And every phase of the girls' immediate future had been so carefully considered and devised! She had begun her work as an unfaltering duty; she had meant to carry it through with an energy so different from that of the paid duenna! And then had come the great, irresistible fondness, overscrolling with its nimbus either cherished head! Her two pupils had grown into her two darlings. To her sense of duty was now added a sense of devotion.

The Summer slowly ebbed, but with it resolve strengthened. Her pair of maiden treasures should not be juggled, like this, from out her embrace. It seemed only yesterday that she had told herself, with joyous prescience, how proudly she would regard them, at some future day, as the happy wives of men whom she should have selected for their husbands. Americans, Englishmen, Germans—what mattered their race, so

long as they were worthy of having won these two rare-natured young women and of discharging the vital responsibility that their vast incomes must involve? But this brazen and farcical imposture, this thief-in-the-night trickery, this crafty stealing of a march—there were times when to recall its beginnings and to note its developments made the blood in Marian's veins like fluid fire.

She dreaded to speak with either of the girls. Reluctantly, one morning, however, she began with Ernestine.

"You seem to like Lord Usk."

Ernestine smiled dubiously. "It's occurred to me, somehow, that you don't."

"But that would not influence you, my dear."

"Oh, yes, yes; it would influence me very much."

"Then, if I did not like Lord Usk——?"

"I should want to know your reasons. I am sure they would be sufficient, satisfactory."

Marian took her hand, holding it. "Ah, Ernestine, our likings are never governed in that way. Unless I gave you strong proof that you ought not to like him you would go on doing so. Even, perhaps, if you found the proof very strong, it would not finally affect you."

Ernestine's hand closed more firmly round her friend's. "You speak as if you thought I had become ever so much attached to him!"

"Are you?"

"He's much older than I am, you know."

"But are you attached to him, Ernestine?"

The color went flying over the girl's face. She threw both arms round Marian's neck. "He can be awfully nice when he wishes," came the half-smothered response.

"True," said Marian, "he can be."

That evening there was an impromptu gathering at the Troops' villa. About twenty young girls and men gathered in the drawing-rooms. Leander got from the hotel two vio-

linists and a pianist, and the young people danced, for by this time Ernestine and Lola were proficient in the art.

Gregory had arrived, and was either whirling through the rooms with Lola or holding tête-à-têtes with her in retired nooks. Lord Usk had not yet arrived. Marian watched Ernestine from time to time. The girl did not look expectant. Her eyes never once wandered toward the doorways. The present assemblage ostensibly occupied her, and she did not appear desirous of any addition to it.

Marian was glad of this. It gave her a new courage, for it was her intent to waylay Lord Usk by the path from the hotel that he would surely take.

But perhaps he would not come at all. She stood motionless, for a little while, near a dark cluster of trees, waiting. Then, just as she was about to return into the villa she saw his tall figure advance.

"It's do or die, this night," she thought, and moved forward to meet him.

XI

HE greeted her tranquilly. "I recognized you," he said, "before I saw your face. That light behind you, from the house there, brought out the lines of your figure. And of course it was a familiar image."

"You were coming to the little party?"

"Yes; I'm a bit late, though."

"Be a bit later, please. I want to talk with you. We can walk round and round this big circular flower-bed for a short while. I believe you've given up dancing, but if you want to see the dancers over yonder you can easily do so, until——"

She left her sentence unfinished, and pointed to the bright rooms, with wind-swayed curtains at their open windows and rhythmic-moving shapes beyond.

"Until——?" said Lord Usk.

"Our conversation is through."

"Is it to be so very serious, then?"

She waved one hand, as though to dismiss useless parleyings. "Why do you stay on here? You know very well that I understand how a place like Shaftesbury bores you; you've told me so twenty times. Evidently you did not come on my account. Are you remaining here because of Ernestine Troop?"

Her abruptness took him aback. "This is all my affair," he got out, after a pause. "You've no right to pelt me with such questions."

"Pooh! I've every right. I am the custodian of both those girls. I love them both, dearly."

"From what I've heard, and considering your well-known attractions, you charge them somewhat cheaply."

"Ah, don't try to fight me with sneers, Usk. Besides, it's especially shabby of you. On your account, pray remember—because you were pitiless and even worse—I was driven from my brother's house. But never mind that. You're aiming, now, unless I'm in error, to marry Ernestine. Face to face, I tell you that this you cannot and shall not do."

She heard his low little wrathful laugh above the elfin arpeggios of the violins. "Some of you Americans are fond of saying that we Englishmen are brutes to our women. These lie; we're not. But if I hadn't cared an immense lot for you I believe I'd feel like something rather bull-doggish now."

"If you struck me or hurt me," said Marian, with her lip curled in the starlight, "you'd play into my hands. And so," she went on, with the pulse of passion stirring her voice, "I almost wish you would thus degrade yourself."

Usk stopped short in the path. "Why do you make such an infernal fuss about my marrying Ernestine? What is it to you?"

"It's this to me: you're not suited to her for a husband. She is not ready to marry yet, in my opinion——"

"Oho!" he jeered, "in *your* opinion."

"And, too, if at any time she married

a man like you, her life would be wretched. She might wear your coronet in a box at Covent Garden; she might rebuild, with her money, one of your fallen towers at Oxenham Abbey, or rehabilitate a ruined wing of Casilear Castle; she might become, through your gracious help, *persona grata* among the royalties. But if she began by loving you, she would end by hating you; and, in any case, she is not going to marry you. Mark that! I have the power to prevent it, Usk, and unless you swear to me this night that you will to-morrow leave Shaftesbury permanently, I swear to you that I will use this power, and make her cut you dead forever."

"Highly dramatic," he jerked out, gutturally. "The stage——"

"Was my vocation. Why didn't I choose it? Are you, a man of art, driven to that commonplace coign of embarrassment—the sort of thing your cold-blooded villain always says in the emotional novels? Listen; listen sanely a minute, Usk, and don't let your temper play pranks with your prudence. You told Ernestine yesterday on the yacht that you had never loved any woman in your whole life till you met *her*. I got it out of the girl at last; I had trouble, though, for her modesty fought against the deep affection she bears me. And I got out more. She doesn't love you; she is simply flattered by your attentions. You're too old to rouse any real love in one of her years. Rather stupid of you not to have seen it! Now, you can accept my terms or refuse them, but it's wiser to do the first. It's wise to take the door of your own free will, rather than have it shut in your face."

"Look out that I don't have it shut in yours."

She heard some muttered words, and saw him dash forward into the brightness.

A little later she had slipped up to Ernestine's side, having taken a route shorter than Usk's.

"Ernestine."

"Yes, dear."

"Will you be brave, here among all

these people, if I whisper something to you?"

"Yes." Pallor went with the girl's monosyllable. She suspected, confusedly, yet somehow definitely.

"Well, then, the man of whom I told you, the man whom I refused to marry, who persisted in his suit, whom my brother abetted, who finally forced me to make the appeal I did for the place I now hold—this man was Lord Usk."

Ernestine caught sight, just then, of a tall form entering the room. She grasped Marian's hand. "Will you tell me more?"

"I will show you more."

"What?"

"His letters—in my room—follow me there as soon as you can."

Marian disappeared. Presently the girl found her up-stairs, seated beside a lamp-lighted table. Open envelopes and unfolded sheets of note-paper were strewn before her.

"You saw him?" she asked.

"Yes—only for a moment."

"And he said——"

"He said that you were his worst enemy, and that—oh, Marian, I can't repeat the rest!"

"Pray do, Ernestine."

"That—you—were jealous!" the girl dragged out, "fearfully jealous! That you were going to tell me of how he had tried to become your husband, but that this would be falsehood, and that quite the reverse was true."

Marian repressed a little shudder. "Quite the reverse was true? Ah, he has indeed been driven to desperate straits. Did—he speak—of his title, perchance?"

"Yes—that you wanted to be Lady Usk and Casilear."

"He dared say that!" Just for a second Marian's eyes were violet flames there in the soft light. Frightened, Ernestine sank into a near chair.

"But I didn't believe him!" she asseverated. "Don't dream I did! I trust you as Lola does—as Lee does! I trust you even more!"

"Trusting is not hurt by seeing, Ernie, dear. Read these paragraphs.

I've marked them with pencil on his letters while awaiting you. I don't know why it was that I kept them, when he was away in California and the Sandwich Islands—keeping letters has long been a habit with me. I've a big boxful of them, not a few from the most ordinary kinds of people. But his were not at all dull. They were often brilliant. You'll observe that when he implores me to become his wife he does so with considerable grace of diction.

"Have you finished that paragraph, my dear? Here, then, is another, and there are surely six more that I have marked. To-morrow I can show you several others, if you wish. And yet he told you that I wanted to be Lady Usk—that jealousy was my present motive!"

People were beginning to depart when Ernestine reappeared, that evening, in the drawing-rooms; for they kept early hours at Shaftesbury.

Lord Usk went to Ernestine as soon as he perceived her. She was pale, and her dark eyes emitted restless lights.

He put out his hand. "Everybody is saying good-night, so I, too, must go, after having missed you for almost an hour."

Ernestine took no notice of the extended hand. She simply moved past Usk at the side of a lady, who was quitting the villa, accompanied by her husband.

It was the deadest of dead cuts. A number of those near witnessed it. Among them was Leander, who gave his sister a black look as Lord Usk went out into the hall.

XII

THE guests had all departed when Leander leveled on Ernestine his big guns. "Good heavens!" thought Marian, still seated up-stairs, on hearing the angry voices; "this will never do. They'll be called vulgar-ians even here in charitable Shaftesbury, if I'm not careful."

She went down-stairs and found Ernestine assailing her brother in tones very tart and shrill. "I'll write to Uncle Asa if you say another impudent word!"

The first to see Marian, Lola ran to her with blazing cheeks. "Erne is right," she said. "It is none of Lee's business to browbeat her as he's doing. She says she's her own mistress, and so she is. So am I."

Marian whispered in Lola's ear. "The servants, my dear, must be listening somewhere. Remember what I've told you: self-restraint and refinement forever go hand in hand. Separate them and they both die."

Lola drooped her head. She went over to Ernestine and her brother. For a moment her coming made no difference.

"I had my reasons," Ernestine was loudly affirming. "He deserved to be cut. He shall never come to this house again."

"The house isn't yours," Leander flared. "It happens to be mine."

"Then I'll take another! I'll——" Here Marian's hand touched her wrist. She turned, looked full into her guardian's mild yet assertive gaze, and added, with a marked fall of the voice: "I'll go away with Marian somewhere else."

"Will you not come up-stairs with me now?" said Marian, very meaningfully. "To-morrow you and your brother can have out this argument, quarrel, discussion—whichever it is."

"Ah," said Leander, his tones greatly softened, while he scanned Marian's face, so troubled, yet so dignified, "I think you know very well the nature of it and the cause of it—both."

She took a step or two, reaching his side. "Do stay up," she pleaded, under her breath, "till I get the girls to their rooms and the servants to shut up the house, and all that! I beg of you, Lee! You won't refuse?"

"No," he said.

She had never called him "Lee" before. Once or twice, during past weeks it had been "Mr. Troop," or

even "Leander." Generally it had been "you." The more familiar mode of address wounded him, hurt him, with a curious shock of pleasure.

He passed into another room, after this, and waited quietly while proofs of her administration, prompt and exact, went on in these lower quarters of the villa. She had always been administrative; she had assumed, superintended, executed in ways that he had never fully realized until now, as he watched the hurrying forms of servants, while they turned out lights, bolted doors, drew down and fastened windows. Presently he returned to the room in which he had left her with his sisters. Only one gas-jet lighted it. The house had grown very still. He saw by a clock on the mantel that it was nearly midnight.

Just then she noiselessly entered. "I hope," she at once said, "that I have not kept you waiting too long."

"Oh, no."

"I find that Ernestine told you nothing."

"She merely claimed her right to insult Lord Usk if she chose. I denied that, and then—well, you heard something of the row that followed."

Marian looked at him steadily. "Ernestine was right."

"Oho! Right to cut a visitor in her own home? Are these the lessons you teach her? Why, we learned our A B C of manners a good deal better in benighted old Stratton."

She held him inexorably with her eyes while she made her answer. It was a very long answer, and when she had finished speaking she drew from her pocket a package, and bade him read, just as she had done with Ernestine, certain penciled passages.

"Now," she at length demanded, "have I been wrong?"

"It doesn't seem to me," came his reply, "that you ever are, or ever could be, wrong in anything."

"Thanks."

He tugged at his mustache. "And yet they say this fellow is rich."

"Decidedly rich. Richer than most English peers."

"Well, then——"

Marian shook her head from side to side. "Ah, but you forget, Ernestine is enormously rich."

Leander scowled. "It's pure avarice, then?"

"It's the bedazzling lure of immense wealth. It's one of the snares and tricks from which I want so intensely to save your sisters, if I can." She gave him her hand, with a sudden impulse. "There, I've told you everything. Now act as you please."

A kind of grim fun broke into his features. "You never think of saving me."

She felt his fingers close on her hand, and she firmly drew it away. "Oh, men are—men. They can fight it out for themselves."

"Often we fight, yes; but we don't always fight it out."

"That's because——" she hesitated, vaguely smiling.

"Well? Because?"

"—you shirk issues."

"What kind of issues?"

"Must I be so very explicit? Put it this way, then: Why are you yourself not happy? Oh, I can see you're not! You have everything, and yet there are times when you feel as if you had nothing. Why is this?" In the still, hot room her tones were so low that they seemed almost like the drowsy music of light wind among leaves. "Why is this?" Marian repeated.

"Perhaps you know," said Leander.

"I guess."

"You should be sure—you, of all people."

She passed this over, as if it had not been spoken. "Men, so much more than women, have their happiness in their own hands. Countless women must drown in silence a sorrow that countless men have the option either to endure or dismiss. You are miserable because you treated most unfairly a good and true girl who loved you, whom you loved in return, and whom you love at the present hour."

He gave a little cry of exasperation.

"You sounded that string the other day when we talked together on the yacht. You're sounding it again. You mean that I should write Annie Shelton a letter?"

"I will write it for you!" Marian eagerly threw back. "I know just what you ought to tell Annie. I'll bring it to you when I've finished it, and we can go over it together. We'll discuss it, point by point. All that you disapprove I'll either alter, or else—" She pursed her flowerlike mouth here, creased her bewitching brows and raised a forefinger, letting it cut the air in slow, emphatic slants. "Or else—well—I'll argue the question till one of us yields."

Leander gave a high, dreary laugh. "You mean till I yield. How you must have your way with everyone!" His eyes flashed. "Good God! you can have it with me. If you'll marry me——"

"No, no. Don't go on. I abhor that! You know why."

But he was obdurate. He named a great sum. "Before you become my wife it shall be turned over to you, every dollar. There! Do you hate me so much that you'll cast me off even on those terms?"

"I don't hate you," she said. "I am fond of you, in a way. You're at heart the best of brothers. Besides that, you've many fine traits. But you don't love me any more than I love you. You think that you love me, though you really love Annie still. And then, you know, Leander, it's vulgar, terribly vulgar, to flare money in the face of any woman whom you respect."

"Oh, no, no! I——"

"Yes, I understand. But in this case it's more than vulgar—it's disloyal."

"I—never—told—Annie——"

"That you wanted to be her husband? Oh, yes, you did. You told her by your actions many a time in those three or four years. Your own words have confessed it to me."

"You say that I only think I love you, Marian Warrender! You're very

wise; I grant you that. But how can you be wise enough to read my heart?"

"Because you show it me like a necktie."

"How?"

"You are unhappy, and I am not the cause. Ten times at least—since I have lived with the girls and yourself—you have asked them anxiously about their letters from friends in Stratton. This was when the post came without your having first seen the writing on various envelopes. But, whenever you saw the letters first—and I chanced to watch you look them over—I have noted with what eager eye you have scanned each superscription. You know your Annie's handwriting only too well. You thought she would write to your sisters. But she has not written, and you are too proud—ah, must I say too purse-proud?—to have sent her, on your own part, a single line!"

He answered harshly. "I suppose I'm a vulgarian; I suppose we're all three vulgarians. You know all about the other things—culture, manners, decorum. But isn't it rather unrefined to tell me, right to my face, that I'm—purse-proud?"

"Yes," Marian assented. "But I had to do it. Pardon me. Still, I did it with a purpose. I wanted to be curative, and so I was—surgical." Here she let her hand fall for a second on his arm. "What you feel toward me is merely fascination. Oh, trust me, trust me, for I am right."

"You would call Annie a vulgarian, if you met her," he said, doggedly. "And if you didn't, others would."

"I want to meet her." Then, as if spurred by a sudden inspiration: "Go to her, Leander, if you won't write. Go to her, marry her there in Stratton, and bring her here. The girls, you know, are very fond of her. She shall be my third pupil. Bring her."

As she said these words Marian slightly opened her arms, with a receptive gesture. At this moment, quite unconsciously, she was magnificent.

With agitated face and between eye-

lids contracted as if by the stress of painful revolt, Leander watched, appreciated, admired her.

But he answered, with a kind of strangled savagery: "No, no. Make it as many pupils as you please. Only I won't write and I won't go to Stratton. I'll stay on here, with my neck under your heel. You're a born despot. You're only contented when you can lay down the law. You want the earth. Well, I'd give it to you if I could, and how glad you'd be to get it!"

She looked at him across one shoulder, with a sad smile, just as she was leaving the room.

"Ah," she said, "how unreasonable! Haven't you just offered it to me, and haven't I refused it?"

Going up-stairs through the darkened house, Marian broke into one of her rare fits of tears. Once in her bed-chamber, she sought for a hidden photograph of her dead husband, and stared steadily into the unforgettable features.

"Oh, Arthur, you may have heard! They say that everybody has his price—and hers! In this money-mad world of to-day I refused millions, just for a memory! But that memory is priceless, my lost love! A planetful of gold could not purchase it!"

XIII

MARIAN breakfasted in her own apartments. She received a shock when she asked the maid concerning Ernestine and Lola. Did not Mrs. Warrender remember? This was the morning of their bicycle trip to Thaxter Cove. They had gone an hour ago, joining Mrs. Larrabee and some ladies and gentlemen who had called for them. They had wished to bid her good-bye but would not wake her, and they knew it had been settled that she was not to join them.

"How forgetful of me!" Marian murmured. "Ellen, by the way——"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Did you notice if Lord Usk was in Mrs. Larrabee's party?"

"I didn't see him, ma'am."

"Nor Mr. Gregory Renshaw?"

"He wasn't there neither," said Ellen.

"And Mr. Troop, did he go with the young ladies?"

"Yes, ma'am. He jumped on his wheel just while they mounted theirs."

A little after luncheon-time Gregory strolled into the villa. He did not find Marian indoors, but seated with a book amid the shadows wrought by tapestries of honeysuckle on a certain segment of the generous piazza. He handed her a letter, and then sank gracefully into a hammock directly in front of her.

Marian glanced at the letter. "From Usk to Ernestine?" she said.

"Yes."

"How odd that he didn't send it more secretly."

"He had no such wish. It merely contains four or five lines of good-bye, wholly conventional."

"He's going, then?"

"He has gone."

Marian instantly suspected some treachery, and slightly threw back her head with an air of cool defiance.

"Gone where?" she demanded.

"Oh, anywhere; to New York for the present, I suppose. He's thrown up the game. He'll never trouble you again, auntie, dear. It isn't that he endorses your scheme of guardianship and amelioration as either permissible or otherwise. It's only that he accepts my advice."

"Your advice, Gregory?"

"Does that seem so incredible?" Here Gregory rocked himself rather vehemently in the hammock. "Well, you've always thought me a rather precocious baby."

"Far from it. But I've——"

"Nevertheless, I stayed away from Mrs. Larrabee's picnic in order to have a tussle with Usk. It lasted two hours. He consumed about fifty cigarettes during that interim, and now and then it looked as if he were about to fling one of them in my face. But he didn't; he listened, and was finally persuaded."

Gregory slowly pulled off one of his dove-colored gloves of Swedish kid. He had thrown his dove-colored wide-awake on the little table that held some bit of his aunt's neglected fancy-work. Marian watched him, in his spotless flannels, with his lilac necktie and fresh linen and varnished boots. He was not foppishly dressed; it was the perfect sea-side costume of his period. The face like sculpture, the eyes like large bluish gems, the fleece of short, thick curls, curving trimly round either temple, suited his gear as a portrait suits its frame.

All this Marian took in and keenly admired. Once she had had a soft spot in her heart for this comely young relative. Something of the old fondness returned now. Had its reaction anything to do with the words he had just spoken?

"You say, Gregory, that Usk was finally persuaded—and by yourself?"

"Yes. I convinced him that it was caddish to try and cut under you like this, in your efforts to place those girls on a level with their new requirements."

"Then he has really gone?"

"Oh, absolutely, permanently. Shall I add, dear auntie, eternally? It would be true. You've one less weasel to scare away from your chickens."

Marian laughed, unwillingly. "Who are the other weasels?"

"I don't know of any but one," said Gregory, sadly. He gave the hammock a bold rearward swing, and then stopped it with an out-jutting foot.

"I mean myself."

"Then you admit——?"

"That I came here, precisely as I first told you, out of curiosity. Perhaps I came to scoff. But I stayed to pray. I stayed to pray that you would let me marry Lola." He dashed up from the hammock, caught a wicker chair, and twirled it dexterously to within an inch of Marian's. Then he sank into it, and caught his kinswoman's hand. "Oh, auntie, I've been wayward and worldly in my talk, in my ideas, in my actions. We were

once great chums, were we not? But somehow we stopped being chummy any more, didn't we, about two years ago? I remember that day so well when you told me I was good-looking, talented, witty, attractive, but hard as a stone. It grieved me so much to be called hard as a stone. And I resented it, furtively scoffed at it. But the callousness of which you accused me was only callowness, after all. I was such a silly youngster; I was so ridiculously *en herbe*. It was a little hard on me to call me hard. I was merely soft, in the sense of absurd egotism wedded to sophomoric youth. And then father—he had been so cruelly hard! But never mind that. . . . Since I came here you must have seen a change in me, auntie—you must have seen it and wondered at it."

"Really, Gregory," said Marian, "I've done nothing of the sort."

She spoke somewhat listlessly. But feeling his hand tighten about her own, she turned and saw that his eyes were full of tears.

"Oh, Gregory!" she exclaimed; and a great rush of feeling swept through her bosom, half born from the bonds of blood, half from the remembrance of earlier intimate and cherishing hours. "Perhaps other thoughts have preoccupied me, dear boy. Is there a change?"

"Ah, you have loved, auntie, so you must know what I mean when I tell you that love has worked the change! All my world has grown different. And only because of that little bright-haired girl, Lola. I've never said to her one word of the truth. There have been days and evenings, here at Shaftesbury, when I felt that it must leap from my lips. But I kept silent, and I don't know at this moment if the darling girl cares for me or not! I was loyal to you, auntie. Mother and I had talked your plan over, and I knew you so well that I felt sure you would carry it out in a spirit of the sweetest lealty, while working your own self-release. I don't ask you for Lola now. I ask you to give her to me at

some future day! I ask you to let me ask her if she loves me. Then I promise you that I will wait. And meanwhile I will go back to father. Whatever he tells me to do downtown in that awful office I'll perform with sublime humility. I'll be a saint there—an excessively unbusinesslike and uncommercial one, most probably, but still a saint. I can't very well suffer and be strong in arithmetic, but my aureole must cast a halo over incorrect multiplication and sanctify blunders in book-keeping. There—you're laughing! That's because I've fallen into my old joking groove again. But, ah, auntie, though life used to be a big, gilded joke to me, it isn't going to be that any more. It's going to be monstrously serious. You'll trust me, will you not? I don't care for her money. I hate the very thought of it! I wish she hadn't a dollar! I love my little Lola—I love her, I love her, and if I lived a thousand years she'd be my first love and my last! Now, auntie, you will trust me, will you not?"

Marian's answer came slowly. She took both his hands and looked at him long and with great steadiness, while her lips trembled and her violet eyes burned like Winter stars.

Then she leaned forward and kissed him, quite gently, on the forehead. But still she made no answer. Once again she looked at him very steadily, and her fingers, round either of his hands, grew tenser.

At last, with a sudden self-abandoning tenderness, inexpressibly sweet, she kissed him full on the lips.

"Yes, dear Gregory, I will trust you!"

XIV

THE bicycle party arrived from Thaxter Cove quite late in the afternoon. But only a few minutes after Ernestine, Lola and Leander had smilingly bidden their companions adieu, both girls were in tears, and their brother unhappily frowning.

Uncle Asa had written them from Stratton. The letter, carefully devised not to shock, nevertheless brought pangs of alarm. They realized with poignant suddenness how dear their mother had been to them. For a time they clung to one another; they stared into one another's eyes; even the near presence of Marian faded into a sort of mistlike contiguity. But, strangest of all, the garments of their late mental rehabilitation dropped, so to speak, away from them. They addressed one another as they had done at Stratton; they clipped their words; they floundered piteously among impetuous "ain'ts" and "guesses"; they dissipated unawares the new melodies that either tutelage or unconscious mimicry had infused into their voices, and uttered their cries of grief in the old homely tones of humbler days.

For a while Marian watched them, infinitely touched. She felt disassociated from them, exiled, repelled. Soon her eyes wandered toward Leander's melancholy face. He gave her a quick nod, which she as quickly comprehended.

She went to the girls at once, and reached an arm about either of their necks. Immediately they gave her tearful yet ardent welcomes. The dark head and the bright head meekly sank on her shoulder.

"Now, girls," began Marian, in her cheeriest staccato, "you're both tired after your long trip, and you must both lie down. Come up-stairs with me, and I'll do all I can to lull you into a good nap before dinner. I'll read aloud to you, or I'll get nice old Madame Boudinot to intone one of those French poems that you think so full of music but insist that you can't yet understand. There isn't the slightest reason for you to feel utterly cast down like this. What, really, has your Uncle Asa written? Why, merely that your mother had been feeling lonely and sad for about a month past, and that the doctor said her heart was weak, and that he didn't like to tell you through fear of

causing needless anxiety. Then, the other day, she had a fainting fit in church. Well, the weather out there was horribly hot, as we've been reading in the newspapers, and very probably the sermon was tedious. He promised you that the minute she grew at all worse he would telegraph. But nearly a week has passed since the date of his letter, and he hasn't yet made a sign. Surely there was never a more conclusive case of no news being good news. Think how many people in the world have weak hearts and yet live on with them for years, and years. And a mere fainting spell! Why, girls, I thought you had more sense. She wants to see you, Lola? Well, what's to prevent your going on? You might find her dead when you got there, Ernie? Now I see the folly of 'biking' twenty miles in one day. You're both horribly fagged out, and——"

Standing with one elbow on the mantelpiece, Leander heard the tender, consolatory voice die away. They left the room in a triple embrace, of which Marian made the centre. He sat down and tried to be stoically patient until she returned. He somehow felt that she would return. Certain prompt arrangements must be made, and of course they must talk these over together.

It seemed to him an age until she reappeared. "Well?" he said, quickly rising.

"They're both so tired, poor dears!" Marian said. "They're asleep already."

"You think, naturally, that mother must be a very sick woman?"

"Your uncle hasn't telegraphed."

"True. But we ought to go right on. That's your opinion, isn't it?"

Marian seemed to turn it over. "Yes," she presently answered.

He looked at her with a wistful forlornness. "We'll take their two maids?"

"Oh, by all means. And your man as well—why not? I'll have the packing begun this evening. Tell your man, please, that I want his help."

Leander's eyes could not leave her face. He coughed; he fumbled jerkily with his watch chain.

"Suppose poor mother dies," he somberly brought out.

"Why, then," said Marian, low-voiced, "you'd come back. Wouldn't you?"

He coughed again. "Why, yes, yes—of course. But if—she lingers on—in sickness?"

"Oh, then, you couldn't come back—could you?"

"No." Here Leander drew in a long, deep breath. His eyes fell, then lifted. "It's only fair to settle everything with you. It isn't right that you should suffer because of this—this accident."

Marian, for a moment, seemed bewildered. "Settle with me? Suffer because— Oh!" And her face brightened understandingly. "I see. You think I'll take my salary without earning it? Never! never! For surely you don't dream I'd desert the girls now, when they need me most!"

Leander sprang toward her. "God bless you! You're going to Stratton with us, then?"

"And coming back with you, I hope, in a few weeks, when your mother is better and sanctions a second leave-taking."

Leander kissed the hand that she had let him hold. "I'm so glad!" he faltered.

"No more than I am," said Marian. "Did you fancy you could get rid of me so easily? Not a bit of it! Thus far it's all been a prelude with my two darlings. The green curtain is still down; the musicians have played one air, and as the performance isn't yet ready, through some little hitch of delay, they're about to begin another. Besides, to change my metaphor, I'm very anxious to get a glimpse of our national Rockies from one of those superb drawing-room cars that I'm always hearing about. And while we're admiring them, Lee, I want to tell you a little secret that concerns Lola and my nephew, Gregory Renshawe. But never mind it

now— Go? Why, what on earth made you imagine I wouldn't go?"

"I can't tell," he stammered. "I—I ought to have known you'd be faithful to—the—girls."

His hand-clasp had grown more fervent than she liked. She gave him a slight frown, whose rebuke and reminder he palpably accepted, and slipped her hand from his loosening hold. The next instant, however, her face became filled with its gayest yet subtlest charm.

"The girls—ah, true enough! Still, I'm going on your account, too."

"On mine?"

"Oh, yes. I do so want to meet a certain person."

"A—certain—person?"

"You know whom I mean. Don't pretend to be obtuse; it ill becomes anyone of so keen a mind. Whom could I mean but—Annie Shelton?"

"You want to meet her, then?" he asked.

"I want to see you meet her—to be near you both when you have met. Do I not make myself plain?"

An eager kindness overflowed her look. But in it there was also a species of tender prophecy.

Leander tried to smile. Then his face clouded wretchedly. "Ah, no, no!" he cried. "This will not do!"

Marian intently watched him. "It will not do?" she repeated, in tones of direct, acute interrogation. "Then what will do?"

"That—that idea—you must—give it up," said Leander, as if clogged and mired among his own words. The next sentence was steadier: "I'll not agree to have you go on there for the purpose of making me marry Annie Shelton. It's too nonsensical—too farcical!"

"Very well," said Marian. "If I don't bring you together as you should be brought together, I will not go at all."

"I can't help that." Leander spoke with half-averted face.

Marian at once moved away from him. "So be it. When the girls

wake I shall tell them that I am not going to Stratton."

"Tell them why, please," called Leander, turning on her with a dreary fierceness.

"You can tell them that, if you choose," said Marian; and immediately she passed from the room.

XV

THE girls awakened from a long nap, refreshed and eager for their dinner.

"I sha'n't go down-stairs with you," Marian said to them. "You can dine with Leander. I have a hard headache, and all that I shall want I will tell the servants to bring me."

"Oh, you, too, are worried!" said Ernestine. "I don't wonder; you've grown so like one of ourselves." She hesitated, reaching out a hand toward Lola, who came and stood beside her. "If we must go back, Marian, it will be sad to leave you behind us."

"Ah, so very!" added Lola.

"Sadder still for me to remain," Marian answered. "But your brother will tell you——"

She paused, for a servant had entered, bearing something on a salver. Ernestine quickly caught it up. "A telegram. 'Troop,'" she read, in quivering voice. "That means," while tearing open the envelope, "that Uncle Asa has—bad—news."

"Perhaps not," said Marian, with all the cheeriness she could muster. "Let me see." And she took the telegram from Ernestine's tremulous fingers. First she swiftly scanned its contents. A glad cry soon followed this rapid perusal.

"Listen, girls, listen! Glorious news! It's taken away my headache, and it ought to give you splendid appetites!" Then she read aloud:

Mother all right now. I think it must have been the awful heat we have had out here. The doctor thinks so, too. I guess both doctor and me were only scared. But you know Dr. Freeman, our old friend, so I

needn't tell you how much he thinks of your ma and every one of us. Now, don't worry any more, for there isn't the least reason to. Your ma is as likely to see her eightieth birthday as not. She took a long walk to-day and wasn't a bit tired, and ever since the cool weather came she's eaten and slept fine, and now she's as well as anybody in Stratton.

UNCLE ASA.

The girls were sobbing with joy as Marian ended, but they soon dried their eyes. Marian kissed them, told them that dinner was waiting, and that their brother should, by all means, hear without further delay the magnificent tidings.

Her influence, always potent with them, soon wrought its accustomed results. After they had gone downstairs she dropped into a chair. Directly in front of her was a small table near which she had stood while reading the telegram aloud. In another instant she perceived that the telegram still lay there—that the girls, who had doubtless intended to take it with them down into the dining-room, had forgotten it.

"Well, they'll send or come for it," she thought. And then her mind wandered to other matters. "They are probably—most probably—not going to Stratton now. Still, the very effects of this shock may give them the desire to pay their mother at least a short visit. And I cannot go; my mission ends. Leander has confused everything. He has darkened my day, troubled my little lake, frosted my grass, leveled my trees, desecrated the whole landscape of my new expected life. By this time I should have told him about Gregory's love for Lola. What will Gregory say to-morrow when he hears that I have not even faintly urged his cause? Oh, if I could only do something to show this Leander how ungenerously he has treated the girl he really loves! But I cannot—I cannot! I confront a locked door, and the key is lost!"

This last reflection drifted through Marian's mind just as her eye fell once more on the open telegram. Who can penetrate the mystery of certain men-

tal mutations? Like a flash she started from her chair, for like a flash the possibility of an unforeseen project had besieged her faculties.

She stood for a moment irresolute. The servant might soon arrive with the dishes she had ordered. Close beside her was the empty grate. She glanced at several newspapers on an adjacent chair. Her first action was to lay hold of these, crumple several sheets, cast them into the grate and apply a match. The blaze quickly followed. She seized the telegram and flung it into the little fiery turmoil.

"Now!" she said aloud.

Just then a knock sounded. It was the servant with tray and plates. There was an odor of smoke in the room, and the flames were playing more feebly and fitfully in the grate.

"I've been burning some old papers and letters," Marian explained.

"Mr. Troop, ma'am," said the servant, "would like to see the telegram that the young ladies opened."

Marian pretended to search. "I can't find it anywhere," she presently announced. "I thought Miss Ernestine or Miss Lola took it down-stairs."

XVI

WHEN the servant came again to her room Marian said: "You needn't bring anything more. I think I shall soon go for a little walk. Say this to the young ladies if they should come up and find me absent."

Soon afterward she slipped from the house by a side door, and stole to the windows of the dining-room. Through the lace-curtains she saw both the girls rise from the table and slowly disappear. Leander remained seated for some time; then, at length, quitted his chair with nervous haste. Suddenly he stood quite still, and then—in an absent way—approached one of the open windows. While he was drawing back its curtain Marian glided nearer.

"Will you join me out here?" she asked. "I have something to tell you."

She moved quickly away, not waiting for his answer. She began to walk round the spacious, circular flower-bed, keenly remembering at each new step the harrying interview held not long ago with Lord Usk.

Leander joined her sooner than she had expected. As they began to move onward, side by side, she questioned:

"Shall you go now with the girls?"

"I shall go without the girls," he answered. "I'll leave them in your charge, if you'll let me."

"Of course; but the telegram——"

"Ernestine told me every word of it." He drew in a deep breath. "The relief has been enormous."

"And yet you are going?"

"Yes. I shall make them a visit. I—I think it best. I—" He stopped, dead short.

"Ah," said Marian, touching his arm for a second, "you are going because of Annie Shelton!"

He did not respond, so she went on: "This alarm, this flurry of fear and dread, has turned your mind toward a new anxiety. Tell me that I'm right, Lee. I said to you not long ago that you still loved her. You've thought of what might happen to her. The old are not all of us who are threatened. What calamity might at any moment overtake Annie? You love her. You know you love her. You know you're secretly ashamed of the way you've treated her."

They moved on in silence for a little space. At a certain spot where Marian recalled that there stood a rustic bench, she reached forth dizzily in the dubious gloom, and caught one of its arms. A faintness had assailed her, but it was transient, soon yielding to her effort at governance.

Leander looked down at the place that he might have taken beside her, but remained standing.

"I must do it—I must do it. It shall be done—if everything else fails."

Thus hurriedly spoke Marian to her own agitated heart. Next instant she heard Leander saying, "So this is the something you wanted to

tell me? But I've heard it all from you before."

"You can't hear it too often. And you can't deny its truth. Tell me, do you intend to return from Stratton without bringing her here as your wife?"

He turned away. "Oh, perhaps she's married to another sweetheart by now."

"Everything else," as I called it," swept through Marian's thought, "has failed! Now for my last attempt!"

Aloud she said: "Suppose you were told that she was lying, at the present moment, very dangerously ill?"

"What do you mean?" he demanded, sharply.

Marian let a sequence of seconds go flying by. She seemed to be counting them. "Suppose Annie were dead," she murmured.

"Dead!" He flung himself into the seat at her side. "That telegram?" he demanded. "What did you do with it?"

"I burned it."

"Burned it?"

"Yes, by mistake. I threw into the grate some old letters and papers I wished to destroy, and somehow the telegram must have got itself mixed up with these. Ernestine had left it on my table instead of bringing it down-stairs. Everything that I read to her from it was true. But there was something added that I did not read. I wanted to spare them, for the present at least, further distress. I wanted to spare them these words: 'You will be sorry to learn that your old friend, Annie Shelton, has a terrible attack of typhoid in its worst form. She is now very low, and Dr. Freeman tells me there is only the faintest hope.'"

Leander's first words made it clear that he had not doubted the truth of what she had just said.

"I should have heard that sooner."

"Why?" she asked.

"Because—" He rose. "Because—" he began again, chokingly. Then, dropping back into his seat: "Oh, I should have wired Uncle Asa,

by this, for constant news! I should have tried to find out the earliest train for Stratton!" The sentence ended in a sharp shiver. She saw that he was trembling. His knotted hand, laid on the bar of cedar behind him, shook with odd tremors.

Her own agitation lessened. In place of it an intense yet quiet pity took possession of her. She leaned nearer to him. His face was drooped, and as she watched his vague form she perceived that it shook at intervals like his clenched hand.

"You—you did love her, then, Lee?" she said.

"Yes."

"And yet you treated her——"

"Oh, horribly, horribly! I knew, all this time, that she was suffering there, thousands of miles away!"

"Strange, strange," Marian mused, aloud. "You were willing to tell me that you loved me; you were willing to beg of me, as you did," she continued, with more direct personal address, "that I should become your wife. And so, all along, I have been right. It was bewitchment, infatuation—an emotion on the surface of this profounder feeling, like—like curls of foam, Lee, on some deep wave. Am I not right? Tell me; am I not right?"

He raised his head; the lowered moonlight struck level against his tormented face.

"Yes, yes. I think that nothing but this could have shown me the difference between these two attachments. Dying there at Stratton! Poor Annie!"

He sprang to his feet. Marian, a second later, rose also. She caught the lapel of his coat, staring fervidly into his face.

"You are sure, now, that you've always loved her best? You have no doubt? I want you to be quite—quite certain that even if she dies——"

"If she dies," he struck in, "I shall never cease to feel racked with remorse. I remember your words to me now; they seem burning into my brain: 'You are unhappy, but I am

not the cause.' Then you called me 'purse-proud.' I was. It was the money, the new, monstrous lot of money, that made me leave her as I did—poor Annie!" He covered his face, and soon she heard sounds of sobbing.

At this point she moved a little apart. The truth had come to him at last! But she must not let him endure this pain. She must unlie her lie. And how would he receive these fresh tidings? Never mind how; if his anger crushed her she must not leave him, poor, wilful, foolish boy, with this hard, stabbing agony. She used great effort to make herself thoroughly calm. Retracing her steps, she reached his side.

"Lee."

He turned, and faced her in the shadow. "Well?"

"I lied to you. I lied because I thought it might be best—might show you your own heart. As far as I know, Annie Shelton is quite well. There was nothing at all about her in the telegram—nothing, nothing."

She saw his face soften, then gladden. Next there came into it a hard, harsh look. It frightened her—she recoiled.

"You lied to me! you tricked me! You admit it?"

"Yes."

"Then to-morrow you must go away. I will never notice you again. This must be your last night with my sisters—this has been your last day under our roof."

He passed hastily from her sight, into the swallowing dimness of the hemlocks that stood in denser groups a little beyond.

"Why, Marian, where have you been?" said Ernestine. "It is cold out of doors. You look so pale, and you're trembling!"

"I was walking outside for a short while," Marian answered. "I thought the fresh air might help my headache." She looked about the brightly lighted sitting-room. "Where's Lola?"

Ernestine first answered with an

odd little smile. "She's yonder." A doorway, tapestried in light-blue silk, gave on a smaller apartment, which they had grown to call "the nook." Just then Marian heard a high, merry laugh.

"Gregory is with her?"

"Yes," replied Ernestine.

"I—I think I'll go up-stairs," Marian said, wearily. "I've been down by the shore; I sat for a while in that little Summer-house on the rocks."

"But you were away so long. It must be an hour now since I went to your room and found you'd left it."

"Yes, dear. Has—your brother—come back?"

"He went up-stairs a good while ago."

"Did—he—speak to you?"

"No. He seemed to be in trouble."

Ernestine was searching her friend's face. "And so are you! Oh, Marian, tell me——"

Suddenly Marian threw both arms around the speaker's neck. "Oh, Ernie, dear, I must leave you; I must leave you both!"

"Leave us!" cried the girl. "You shall not! Who says that you must?"

At this moment Leander came quietly into the room. He was very pale. He paused for an instant, then approached Marian. He held a small folded paper, which he extended toward her.

"Will you read this?" he said.

Marian took the paper. Presently she read:

Forgive me. After all, I think you have been right. I know you so well that I feel what you did must have been very difficult

for you to do. And, when all is said, I feel, also, that I cannot and ought not to blame you.

Marian rose from the sofa almost staggeringly. She had never been more beautiful than now, with her burning violet eyes and the vivid rose of her cheeks.

"God bless you, Lee!" she cried, and caught each of his hands with her own.

"Someone else should say that of yourself," he answered.

"You mean—Annie? Let me hear her say it one day! Let me hear soon! You are going to her?"

"I am going to her—yes."

"And you'll bring her back as your wife?"

He drooped his head. There was silence. Marian waited, with all her heart in her face.

Slowly, but with sincerest intonation, Leander broke the pause. "Yes, I shall hope to bring her back as my wife."

Just as he turned away there came pealing from the room in which Gregory and Lola were seated another high and merry laugh.

"Listen," said Ernestine. "How happy they seem!"

Marian spoke in her ear, with a blithe whisper. "Soon your brother will be just as happy, and not long afterward you, too, will be; I'm nearly certain."

"And what of yourself?" asked Ernestine.

"Of me?" Marian replied. "Oh, I shall never be any happier than you've already seen me. But I expect to be immensely contented!"



PA'S IDEA OF SHIPS

"WHAT is an air-ship, pa?"

"A ship that puts on airs, my son."

"Is an air-ship, like other ships, called 'she'?"

"Certainly. Didn't I just say that an air-ship was a ship that puts on airs?"

May 1902

HOW WILL IT BE?

HOW will it be when Spring comes back again,
 Golden with sun and musical with rain?
 I can be brave, when snow drift fills the air,
 To know Love dead; content that I may share
 My sorrow with the gray world's patient pain.

Nay, I forgot, O foolish heart and vain,
 That some day all of sunshine everywhere
 Would clasp and kiss the earth to make it fair—
 How will it be when Spring comes back again?

Love in my heart so many months hath lain,
 Like some dead flower that the frost hath slain.
 I am afraid lest, some delicious day,
 Lo! he may stir, as is the flower's way,
 When May's white magic 'wilders soul and brain.
 How will it be when Spring comes back again?

THEODOSIA GARRISON.



ONE TOO MANY

SALLIE RAITUS—How many languages do you speak, Polly?
 POLLY GLOTTE—Eight. When I tackled the ninth I saw my finish.
 SALLIE—What was it?
 POLLY—Finnish.



NOT CLASSIFIED

FRIEND—Doesn't the doctor know what is the matter with you?
 PATIENT—I guess not. He knows I've got microbes, but he doesn't
 know what kind they are.



SAMMY (*admiringly surveying his lately arrived twin sisters*)—Did you get
 them cheaper by taking the two, papa?

THE STATUE AND THE BUST

(With acknowledgments to Browning)

By Josephine Dodge Daskam

HE was as fair a gentleman as one could wish to see;
His cheeks were pink, his eyes they were as blue as blue could be;
His curly hair was parted down the middle perfectlee.

And she? Her brow was like Miss Laurie's—which was like the snow;
Her eyes were also blue, and round them lashes long did grow;
And oh, her hair you could not see, it shone and glittered so!

Now he was dressed in coat and vest, a shirt and a cravat,
And on his parted hair he wore a stylish derby hat—
Because he wore naught else, dear friend, ah, do not blush for that!

For other members had he none; below his waist he stopped.
Were it not for an iron brace, all weakly he'd have flopped.
He showed off coats and vests and hats for gentlemen who shopped.

Now she was dressed in sheeny lace around her shoulders laid;
A lovely sapphire pendant, too, her shapely bust displayed;
For that she was not better clothed, turn not aside, fair maid!

For though her gown were longer, she'd have not had where to place it;
And even if she'd had a corset, sure no one could lace it;
And, ah! the waist she did not have! no lover could embrace it!

She was a lovely mockery, a beautiful delusion!
And had you wished to drag her from her merciful seclusion,
You would have stammered, yes, and blushed, and trembled with confusion.

For that was all there was of her—her pretty face and neck!
And she was kept so fresh and fair, without a fault or fleck,
So that the ladies' hairdresser might win his goodly cheque.

But this her lover might not know—he thought she was all there!
“Dear heaven!” he cried, “how couldst thou make a being half so fair?”
And, “Oh, to be with her!” he moaned; “oh, to be near that hair!”

And she, she looked across the street and loved him where he stood;
She did not see the iron brace that kept his poise so good.
She mourned, “Alas! the world is cold! One lives not as one would!”

"Oh, come to me, thou lovely one! Oh, come to me!" he cried.
 "Alas, alas! I have no frame to bear the cold," she sighed.
 (Though this was literally true, yet in intent she lied.)

"Come thou to me, my lover dear, for this were more gallant!"
 "I'll meet you half-way," he replied, "but more than that, I can't!"
 And, although this was also true, yet 'twas deceit, you'll grant.

"Though whistles wildly blow," he swore, "and trolleys roll between,
 Yet, if thou'lt at thy window sit, and by me e'er be seen,
 Though never may we meet, I'll yet be true to thee, my queen!"

"And though this hair should leave my head, I'll cling to thee, my own!"
 So answered she to him, and sweet and dulcet was her tone.
 Ah, never yet across a street such loving words were blown!

But, ah, one day, one fearful day, they changed her lover's place!
 And from this novel point of view he saw her deep disgrace—
 Saw that his lady's lovely form stopped at her lovely lace!

"Good heaven!" he cried, "avert this shame! Oh, would that I were dead!"
 And on his brace he twirled around as though his sense were sped,
 Till with that brace he bored a hole straight through his manly head!

And she, that fair young thing, she saw the pointed top stick through;
 She guessed the whole. "Ah me!" she wept, "that ever breath I drew!"
 And ever now hot rage and shame within her bosom grew,

Until that waxen bosom, melting, softly trickled down,
 And all her lovely face dissolved, until two eyes of brown
 Alone remained—the relics of the fairest thing in town!

Thus did they die. Ah, well-a-day! We all must meet our end!
 But one short lesson may we learn, ere that we graveward wend:
 Never tell half the truth, yet in your heart deceit intend!



WORDS ON WOMEN

A PLAIN woman takes pride in her friends, a beautiful woman in her enemies.

A woman will often say no, when she means yes; but never yes, when she means no.

The normal woman is capable of one love and fifty affairs.

A woman's charity sometimes begins away from home, and then remains there.

A young girl is the nearest approach to an angel that we have—and the most exasperating.

It has never yet been decided whether a woman is happier when happy or when miserable.

When a woman is thoroughly tired, she finds nothing so refreshing as a nice long talk.

THE VICTIMS OF KITTY

By Mrs. Schuyler Crowninshield

THE big, old-fashioned clock in the hall chimed out the hour of four. As the last stroke died away, Challoner extricated himself with an apparent effort from the hammock in which, with pipe and book, he had been striving to annihilate time on Mrs. Drury's piazza. With an exaggerated air of laziness—assumed for the benefit of Molly Drury, a preternaturally sharp young person of fourteen, who was closely watching him from a *chaise longue* near by—he lounged idly to the open door that gave on the wide hall, and there planted himself, with his heart beating excitedly and his eyes fixed on the staircase in joyful anticipation.

Three, four, five minutes passed—no Kitty. He drew out his watch and compared it with the clock; they were in exact accord, but still no sound came from above. A quarter of an hour passed thus—an eternity to Challoner.

Molly drew in her long legs and sat up, closing her book.

"You might as well 'take it easy,' Mr. Challoner," she said. "Miss Leshner won't be down under twenty minutes past the time she set. You've done nothing but fidget since luncheon-time. It quite gets on my nerves. Do sit down."

Challoner meekly obeyed. "You seem to know a lot of things, Molly," he said. "How do you know I'm waiting for Miss Leshner?"

"Oh, just because everybody always is waiting for Miss Leshner. One gets to observe things," she continued, with an elderly air that would

have been sufficiently amusing if one had not been so ready to shake her for her impertinence. "I'm not a deaf and blind idiot, Mr. Challoner. I've noticed a good many things since Miss Kitty's been coming to stay with mother. When Tom is at home, he's always waiting. Mother says, 'Tom, dear, just jump on your wheel and take this parcel to the post-office;' and Tom always says, 'Sorry, mother, I'm waiting for Kitty to go to golf;' or, 'I'm waiting for Kitty to go out in the canoe;' or here, or there, or somewhere. As for the two new curates—the 'Heavenly Twins,' you know—they're always waiting, and she teases them almost to death; and then her 'kindergarten'—the boys, you know—they don't count; they're only too thankful to be allowed to fetch and carry. But Lord Bunny! Oh, if you could have seen Lord Bunny! He simply camped on the front steps. And then the duke! He was too much for words."

Challoner raged inwardly with a fierce jealousy, and, as if divining this, the child went on:

"But don't you worry, Mr. Challoner. 'Safety in numbers,' you know. It isn't half so bad as if there were just one. She's only amusing herself with them all, I dare say. The duke was the last. I told you about him, didn't I? Didn't I tell you about the duke? Oh, that was simply great! The Duke of Billingsgate, you know. Mother would be wild if she knew I'd told you, so you mustn't give it away. Well, the duke came down to visit the Branthams, and the place went mad after him. But

when he met Miss Kitty, no one else had a show. He began to camp on the front steps like the curates, and Lord Bunny, and the kindergarten, and Tom, and the rest. Well, one day he came to dine and spend the night, and I was in the library with a book, so I saw the grand entry. He brought a man-servant, and lots of bags, and a bath-tub! Think of it! A bath-tub! I thought it was perfectly insulting—as if we didn't know how to keep clean. But mother said it was English—oh, excuse me; you're English, too, aren't you? I forgot. But you know we do have bath-tubs, don't you?" Challoner hastened to assure her that he did.

"Well," she continued, "all the family danced attendance on him until he was in his room, and then I heard mother coaching Maria. Dor-kins is English, you know, so he was safe; but Maria isn't, so mother was awfully afraid she'd do or say something to show that we didn't have dukes as an everyday occurrence. 'Now, Maria,' I heard her say, 'if the duke should ask you for anything, remember to say, "your grace," when you answer. You can remember that, can't you?' 'Yis, mum,' said Maria. 'I remember it well.' 'That's right,' said mother. So, down came the duke about a quarter past seven. No one was in the drawing-room, but Maria was lighting the lamps in the hall, and I could see them, though they couldn't see me. When he noticed Maria, he stopped and looked at her, and her face got as red as could be.

"'Well, my lass,' said the duke, 'you're an uncommon pretty-looking girl; I think I must ask for a kiss!' Maria dropped the lamp-lighter, and I expected to see the curtains blaze up. But she folded her hands, and just said, 'For what we are about to receive, the Lord make us truly grateful!' as meek as anything. And he laughed and kissed her, right before my eyes. Mother told her, 'Say your grace,' and that was the way she had been taught to say it."

Challoner roared.

"Oh, of course, you think it's funny!" said Molly, with withering scorn. "Tom roared, too. I've no patience with men! Maria was funny, if you like, but as for that duke, I think he was perfectly horrid! When I have lovers they won't be the kind that kiss housemaids on the sly. I'm going to have a different sort."

Molly's confidences were brought to an end by the sound of an opening door somewhere overhead, the click-clack of heels on the parquet of the upper floor, and the swish of skirts. Then a dainty little figure appeared at the top of the stair and ran lightly down.

"There!" she exclaimed, as she stood beside Challoner, "am I not punctuality itself?"

Challoner pointed to the clock. "Only twenty-five minutes late. Punctuality is the thief of time," he added, sententiously, with the air of saying something no one ever heard before. "I've never been punctual to the minute myself, without having to wait for the other fellow."

"Ah, well," she returned, with a smile that more than compensated for the delay, "the other fellow is here now, so if you're quite ready we'll be off," and she airily dismissed the subject.

These two young persons had met at the Drury's cottage in one of those semi-Southern health resorts where Northern invalids cheat the Winter months of their harvest of grip and pneumonia; where an occasional snow-flurry is the only reminder of their native climate, and where gusty March even is robbed of his terror, and utters nothing more appalling than a lamb-like bleat from beginning to end.

Bertram Challoner had come from England in the interests of a mining company, whose offices in London, New York and the Western town near which the mines were situated employed a number of young men. Letters of introduction to people of the right sort had procured for him invitations to the best houses every-

where, but hitherto he had not met Kitty Leshner, who had come, as she said, from "a little bit of everywhere," and who happened to be staying with Mrs. Drury when his visit became due.

"I wonder I haven't met you before," he said to her the day after his arrival. "You seem to have been a good deal of a wanderer."

"Oh, yes, I am indeed!" she had replied. "In me you behold that pitiful spectacle, a homeless waif. I am thinking of applying to one of the organized charities for relief. As it is now, 'Home is where the trunk is,' with me. I am a perfect nomad."

Then, seeing his puzzled and serious look, she added:

"Oh, don't look so terribly sympathetic, Mr. Challoner. It's not really quite so bad as that. But since my father's death my stepmother and I have preserved a sort of armed neutrality. We are what someone has called 'intimate enemies'—you see, she's only six years older than I, and the relation sometimes becomes a little strained. It's so fatiguing to hear her always harping on past glories and present grievances that I sometimes express my views quite frankly. 'Home is not what it used to be,' that's all."

They had spent but one week in each other's society, yet what cannot be accomplished in one week, when the man is well-born, well-bred, good-looking and sufficiently well provided with this world's goods to be considered an eligible *parti*, and when the girl is simply the most distractingly pretty and attractive creature that the eligible man has ever been privileged to meet? Under certain conditions a week may be an eternity of pleasure or of pain. So far it had been all pleasure.

Together they had explored the dim aisle of the pine groves, sometimes with their hostess in the family trap, sometimes alone and on foot. Together they had floated in Tom Drury's canoe on the still bosom of the little lake, watching the moon rise

over the forest trees that hemmed it round; together they had sat in the moonlight on the broad veranda, he bending toward her as she sang to the tinkling accompaniment of the mandolin, now a coon song, now in turn a Spanish *bolero*, a Venetian boat-song or some lively *chanson*—all given with a dash and spirit that at such moments seemed to be her chief characteristic. At other times, in the half-light of the drawing-room, she had sat at the piano under the shade of the rose-red lamp, and poured forth for him her glorious voice, used with the understanding of one who is trained to all that is best and grandest in the music of the great masters, revealing a depth of feeling hitherto unimagined, until it seemed to him that a lifetime would be none too long for the study of her varied charms.

And this was their last day, and this was to be their last walk together! How could he return to the dull drudgery of office work, and leave behind all that he had learned to prize so highly?

He looked down at the girl by his side—what a little thing she was to have made such a difference in his life! What an influence this chance meeting must exercise on his future! And all in one short week! His eye rested lovingly, adoringly, on every detail; even her clothes had a fascination for him—there was an individuality about them that made them seem a part of herself; and yet, like herself, they were beyond his comprehension.

Sometimes there were shimmering, gauzy evening things that brought out new tints in her exquisite coloring and revealed new beauties in hair and eyes; sometimes there were telling creations in visiting gowns, with *le dernier cri* in the way of hats. But, best of all, he loved to see her as she was now, dressed for their walk in the woods. The details of her costume were as a sealed book to him; he only knew that, from the crown of the hat that rested with a jaunty firmness on the golden head to the tiny shoe just visible beneath the hem of

the trim walking-skirt, she was perfection. Her gown was of navy-blue—of so much he felt certain—and he saw that it suited her as that color suits all women, be they blonde or brunette; otherwise he was conscious only of a dainty neatness that filled his ideal of what a woman's dress should be. A somewhat daring parasol, in broad horizontal stripes of red and white, seemed scarcely in keeping with this faultlessness of attire, and struck an insistent, even discordant, note that demanded attention. But it threw a becoming light on the face beneath, and Challoner was in no fault-finding mood on this, their last afternoon together.

"How crisp you look!" he said, giving expression to his thoughts.

"Oh, thank you," answered Kitty.

"What a pretty compliment! As if I were a celery-stalk or a new five-dollar bill! Bobby Drury was equally flattering the other day. He looked at me very gravely, and asked me, in his solemn way, 'Miss Kitty, are your eyes new ones? They shine so! I think I must be renewing my youth.'"

Challoner laughed. "What a promising youngster Bobby is!" he said. "But as to your eyes, I don't wonder that he thought you'd got a new pair over night—they change so constantly. What color are they? Let me see. At first I thought they were brown, then blue, and now I think perhaps they are gray."

He stooped forward to look under the parasol, but she moved it quickly to one side, and gave him one swift, upward glance that left him as much in doubt as before.

"I'm the last person in the world to know their color," she said.

"'Beauty's eyes,'" he quoted, softly. "You know they're beautiful."

"'Beauty lies in the eye of the beholder,'" she quoted in reply, "and 'there's more scripture for ye,' as our old servant used to say."

Strolling through the forest paths, they came at length to their destination, the Point of Rocks, her favorite retreat, she had told him—over-

shadowed by giant pine trees crowning the summit of a rugged cliff that thrust back the placid waters of a little bay and reared its moss-grown sides above the reflecting waves. A roughly hewn path, strewn with

. . . needles shaken
From out the gusty pine,

skirted the base of the jutting headland, and led to a promontory beyond, where great boulders, heaped on one another by some cataclysm of nature, had given the locality its name.

"And so this is your favorite haunt?" said Challoner. "I don't wonder. How beautiful it is! I feel as if I had been admitted to your *sanctum sanctorum*. But are we at liberty to wander about here? I see a sign over there, 'Let Trespassers Beware!'"

"Oh, that's old Morrison's doing. He's a perfect *Lawrence Boythorn*," said Kitty.

"*Lawrence Boythorn*?" he questioned, vaguely. "I don't know the gentleman, do I?"

"Probably not," she answered; "but you will find him in the works of one Charles Dickens."

"Oh, come now, Miss Leshar! Don't be hard on a fellow. I don't pretend to have read as much as you have. I never saw anything like you Americans for Dickens. Who was this Bigthorn, and what did he do?"

"*Boythorn*," she corrected, "*Lawrence Boythorn*, who was always threatening trespassers with 'mantraps and spring-guns,' and yet was the soul of gentleness. Mr. Morrison is much the same. Let us sit down. It is growing warm. We may as well rest a bit."

She seated herself on a mossy stone, and Challoner threw himself at her feet. Kitty put down the parasol and took off her hat. A little wandering breeze rippled through her hair, and stirred the baby rings on her forehead and behind her tiny ears. Challoner found himself for the hundredth time making a mental inventory of her charms.

No one but a young man very much in love would have called Kitty Lesher beautiful. Her nose certainly had an upward tilt, one of her eyebrows was a trifle higher than the other, and her mouth was too high for beauty. But the smile that played about her lips was so bewitching, the teeth it disclosed so even and white, the dimples that came and went so fascinating, that when the smile was accompanied by one of those dazzling upward glances any man, old or young, would have pronounced such imperfections a thousand times more charming than the dull regularity of classic features.

As Challoner lay now on the ground at her feet, watching her ever-changing expression and the drifting shadows cast by the pine boughs overhead, the words of a sentimental old song came to his mind:

I love the shadows on your face,
The sunlight in your hair.
I love to sit for hours and trace
The many changes there.

How could he go away!

As if divining his thoughts, Kitty said, presently: "I wish you were not going away to-morrow. You're quite the most pleasant person I've met for many a long day."

"Oh, thank you! How good you are! I, too, wish so, with all my heart," said Challoner, brokenly. "It has been all too short. I've never enjoyed a week so much in my life."

"Perhaps you will run down again," she said, tentatively.

"Oh, do you think I might?" he asked, eagerly. "I could run down on Saturday, if you think—if you would like—that is, do you suppose Mrs. Drury—?"

"I'm sure Mrs. Drury will be delighted," she said; and so it appeared, for she so urgently pressed him to return that, not only on the next Saturday, but on the next after that also, Bertram Challoner found himself a guest at Pine Lake and Kitty Lesher's companion on several charming expeditions. Each moment spent in her society was forging golden fetters.

But one day there came a telegram calling him west, and for a fortnight even Kitty Lesher took second place in his thoughts. The affairs of the mining company were seriously involved, and all efforts seemed powerless to avert the inevitable catastrophe. The head of the London office was summoned by cable, and it was not until matters had been placed in his hands that Challoner was able to return to New York.

As soon as his arrangements could be perfected, he returned to Pine Lake. Mrs. Drury, kind and cordial as ever, received him in a silken gown of iridescent hues, sparkling with jet, and "whistling" at every touch, which gave him at once a home-feeling, so distinctly reminiscent was it of the British matron. But the house itself was a tomb, for Kitty was gone. Mrs. Drury launched forth into lengthy accounts of the visits she had been making and the house-party she was expecting to join later, and even read bits of her letters; but the sense of blank disappointment covered Challoner as a pall.

He idled about the house through the morning; then set off to work his way through a long afternoon as best he might, roaming aimlessly up and down the broad, sunny streets that already began to show the approach of Summer. The village was dull and uninteresting; the great hotels were closed, the shops deserted; fashionable *modistes* and tailors had betaken themselves to other resorts, and the windows of the Turkish bazaars were empty. The "Art Studio" alone remained open, and there Challoner paused a moment, attracted by a collection of photographic views displayed in a case outside the door. It gave him a sort of melancholy pleasure to see among them some of the places made sacred to him by association with the girl so often in his thoughts. Here was a pretty bit—the rustic bridge by the willows; this was taken from the top of Windy Hill; there was the Country Club; this—ah, here was one of the Point of Rocks. What a

charming scene! He must possess one of these, for Kitty's sake.

He bent his head and looked more closely, changed his position, and peered through the glass side of the case—changed it once more to get a better light—then, with a smothered imprecation, dashed up the stairs and into the presence of the photographer, with scant ceremony. The artist, a dapper and smiling little person, came forward, drying his hands on a towel.

"And what can I do for you, sir?" he asked, pleasantly.

"What can you do for me, sir?" echoed Challoner, in a towering rage. "You can remove a photograph that is placed conspicuously in a case outside of your door!"

"Ah, really! To which of my prints do you refer? I'm sure I shall be most happy to oblige. I have duplicated all of those views, and if you will kindly look them over——"

He threw on the counter a number of photographs, from among which Challoner instantly selected the cause of offense.

"There!" he exclaimed, holding it under the little man's nose; "how dare you exhibit a scene like that?"

"Why, my dear sir," answered the other, imperturbably, "that is one of our choicest bits. Admirably artistic arrangement on the part of nature. Water, trees, cliff—perfect! And if a figure should appear in the middle distance, why, so much the better; it adds a human interest that is simply invaluable!"

"Damn your 'human interest,' sir!" said Challoner, unable longer to restrain himself. "I demand that you instantly destroy these views—or stay, how many have you of the Point of Rocks?"

"I have printed a great number of all these views. I intend shortly to enlarge them, bring them out in book form, 'Picturesque Points of Pine Lake'—attractive title, sure to take. You can see, my dear sir, what a serious detriment it will be to the work to omit this, one of the choicest bits," he repeated.

"That makes no difference," was the

reply. "I say this view shall not appear. I will pay you for all of them. How much do you want for the lot?"

After some hesitation, the artist suggested that, perhaps, considering the waste of valuable time, the "detriment to the work," fifteen dollars would not be too high a price. The moment the words were spoken Challoner laid the money on the counter. The photographs were immediately enclosed in an envelope, and the smiling artist accompanied his customer to the foot of the stairs, where he withdrew the offending print from the case and handed it to Bertram with the others. They parted, but not for long. The young man had proceeded but a few yards when he halted, stood for a moment irresolute, then, wheeling, retraced his steps and reentered the studio. The artist was still smiling.

"I understand this to mean that you destroy the plate from which these views were printed," said Challoner, with determination.

"Ah, my dear sir," was the response, "you understand nothing of the kind. The prints are yours, but the plate remains mine, to use as I like."

The language with which this announcement was received may best be represented by blanks. Challoner was forced to admit that he had been outwitted, but he would not, as yet, acknowledge himself beaten. At any price, he was determined to accomplish his object; and, when he finally left the place, his pocket was lighter by many dollars than when he entered it, but he bore in triumph the plate, as well as the prints made from it.

He reached his room at the Drurys' without meeting anyone in the hall or on the stairway, and, seating himself at the window, he took from the wrapper the dearly bought photographs and gave himself up to the contemplation of them.

The composition, as the artist had said, was perfect. There was the cliff, crowned with gnarled and hoary pines; there were the little waves rippling on the rocky point, and, in happy unconsciousness of all intrusion, here were

two human beings—a man and a woman—he leaning against a projecting rock, she leaning confidently against his shoulder, with his arm encircling her slender waist. A jaunty hat and a broad-striped umbrella lay at her feet, and in the foreground glared the admonitory sign, "Let Trespassers Beware!"

The figures were small, but that of the girl was unmistakable—Kitty beyond a doubt. What grace in every line and curve! What artlessness in the upturned face and soulful eyes! "Dear little Kitty!" he said, softly. She must never know that they had been spied on during those heavenly moments. He felt in his inmost soul the shock that must inevitably come to so refined and delicate a nature as hers should she ever learn that they had not only been seen, but actually transfixed by the lens's pitiless ray, like two specimens on the pin of an entomologist.

He looked at the pictures one by one; some were more sharply developed than others. Here, for instance, was one that showed with remarkable distinctness the rows of braid encircling the skirt of her white gown.

A white gown? When had she worn white? He could have sworn that on all their walks she had been dressed in his favorite dark blue. He went over in memory, as calmly as he could, the details of their walks and talks in this particular place. And, as he carefully reviewed those scenes, new thoughts came to him. When had they sat thus? When had her head rested on his shoulder? When had he ventured to do more than to touch her hand in greeting or farewell? And yet, here, before his eyes, they sat—his arm round her waist, her head on his shoulder! What did it all mean? Was he dreaming? His brain seemed to reel under the crowding thoughts and questions that came to him.

With nervous fingers he fumbled among the fripperies of the writing-table, until he found a magnifying glass. Then he examined more closely the picture in his hand. Still his eyes

sought only Kitty. How pretty she was! Even prettier than before—now that every line and curve stood out with an increased distinctness. Lovingly he dwelt on the graceful figure, but most of all on the eyes—beauty's eyes so confidently raised to his. Then, casually, his gaze drifted to the form beside her. Here the shadow was heavier and the figure less distinct; but the London-made clothes were familiar enough—so were the strong English shoes, the golf stockings, the—wait! He looked closer—threw down the print and took up another, and yet another. Each one but made it more certain that he was looking on the face of an entire stranger. With a groan he threw the pictures from him and buried his face in his hands.

An opportune telegram arriving before dinner, Challoner made excuses to his hostess; and, amid vociferous regrets on her part and a sense of relief on his own, he departed. The next morning Mrs. Drury's housemaid found, under the grate in the room he had occupied, a heap of ashes—the ashes of a dead hope.

Mental readjustment came slowly, but when it came it was with a shock that was salutary in its effects. On his return to town Challoner had plunged into work with an energy that had astonished his associates. He grew pale, and then his friends, officiously kind, urged change of air or the advice of a physician. Challoner knew better than to expect to recover from his hurt by such means, but he listened patiently to all suggestions, and kept his own counsel. No one should know how deeply he had been wounded, how he had been deceived and his faith in woman shaken by one in whom he had implicitly trusted. Let them suppose his recent losses to be the cause of his altered looks, his preoccupied air. He must fight it out by himself, as many another honest fellow had done before him.

One morning he was on his way down-town in the elevated train. His morning paper lay unopened on his knee, his thoughts were far away.

Presently scraps of conversation drifted to him across the aisle of the car. At first it was only a name—her name—that broke in on his thoughts. Then, as the conversation went on, he found himself stiffening into an attitude of listening; his very ears seemed to be growing, so alert was he to catch every word. Indeed, the two young fellows who were the speakers seemed to care little who heard them. They went into their subject with a freedom of detail that amazed their listener, unaccustomed as he was to hearing private affairs discussed in public places.

The words that attracted Challoner's attention were these, from a young man who was reading his paper:

'Well, I see the fair Kitty has landed her big fish at last—the Duke of Billingsgate, no less!'

"Yes, I'm told it's a go this time," was the reply.

"I think we, the victims, ought to combine in sending a wedding gift. We might do something quite handsome at five dollars a head—a broken heart in diamonds, or something like that," said the first speaker.

"'We, the victims,'" echoed his friend. "Were you one of them?"

"Indeed I was, my dear boy. Weren't you?"

"Oh, that goes without saying. Everyone knows my history. *Arcades ambo*, then! Shake hands, old man."

"Yes, we're 'a noble army, men and boys;' our name is Legion," said his friend. "We've all been in the toils. I doubt if any man, old or young, has the power to escape it, if Kitty means to bag him. From the cradle to the grave not one is safe—not one."

"But the title won the day, after all."

"The title plus the estates. It's always been the money first with Kitty. It had to be. She wasn't cut out for poverty. She only cultivates rich friends. Just let them lose their money, and it doesn't matter what has gone before; it's 'good-bye, John.'"

Challoner rose hastily, and changed his seat for one near the door. Oh, this was monstrous! He would listen no longer—he had heard too much already—and yet, might it possibly be true? These men must know more than he, a stranger. Could it be true that her only interest in him had been because she had known him to be rich? Was that why she had permitted the attentions so seriously given by him, so lightly received by her? Had his sudden reverses caused her to see that his fortune was not of that permanent kind which is represented by great estates in England? He could not, he would not, believe it. Yet to think of her marrying Billingsgate! That was more than he could consider calmly.

Feverishly he opened his paper, and turned the pages until his eye caught the head-lines, "Society Event! Beauty and Rank! Approaching nuptials of noble Briton with one of America's fair daughters!" Then the following:

We are credibly informed that an event of great importance in the highest circles on both sides of the water is soon to take place. The Duke of Billingsgate, who has for a few weeks been a sojourner on these shores, will soon bear away with him as his bride Miss Kathryn Leshner, daughter of the late Simeon Leshner, of this city.

This was supplemented by a florid description of the beauty of the bride-to-be and of the many attractions that had made her so great a favorite, of the vast estates of the prospective bridegroom. His stupendous rent-roll was calculated both in pounds and dollars.

Challoner threw down the sheet in disgust; he could read no more. A profound pity filled his breast, crowding out the fierce anger he had felt but a moment before. Poor little Kitty! The title and estates and all the rent-roll could make life nothing but a curse to the woman who should marry the Duke of Billingsgate— Oh, it was not to be endured!

Again the conversation of the friends reached him, as they approached the door when the train

neared their destination. They were still speaking of the same subject.

"I acknowledge," said one of them, "that it would be a bad lookout for anyone but just such a girl as Kitty—as bad as possible. But Kitty knows how to take care of herself. It is always 'the other fellow' who

has had to suffer. You may trust her to take care of herself still, and to manage the noble duke to her entire satisfaction."

"Park Place!" called the guard. The two friends passed out, and Challoner was left to his own reflections.



THE LAIR OF DREAMS

AS silken fine as mystic webs are spun
 In baffling mazes through the meadow grass,
 And shimmering as their cords when breezes pass
 And move them in the shine of Summer's sun,
 Is her sweet hair. No absent hour is done
 But I have seen in Fancy's mirror-glass
 The enchanting glory of the languorous mass
 That sweeps her brow; and on each wave has run
 The craving of my lips to press its crown.
 The bidding-place of jasmine souls is there—
 Of roses from departing Summers flown;
 And golden love-dreams wandering to the lair
 From which across the star-space they were blown,
 Must find it in the meshes of her hair.

EDWIN LATHAM QUARLES.



HIS CAPACITY

"MRS. TALKINGTON'S husband ought to be a good listener."
 "He is. He can listen to nearly two hundred words a minute."



GONE FOR BAD

CLARICE—Miss Von Peyster has lost her good name.

MAUDE—How did that happen?

CLARICE (*regretfully*)—She married a man named Jones.



AN ESCAPE

WILLIE—Say, that boy sliding down hill with me this morning got run over and killed. I'm glad it wasn't me. Gee, what a lickin' I'd have got!

A SONG OF SEED TIME

HAS Springtime always been so fair,
 With gentle warmth as Summer nears?
 Such days have never been my share
 In all my five-and-twenty years!
 I've drunk the blue of sunny skies
 At Como, Capri and Messina;
 But in my own more beauty lies—
 I'm making garden with Selena.

The borders of the shady mall
 We've sown with white and crimson phlox,
 And in the cranny of a wall
 Laid down the seeds of sundry stocks.
 That bed's for musk and mignonette,
 And that for slips of sweet verbena.
 The time flies as it ne'er flew yet—
 I'm making garden with Selena.

A drift of snowy clematis
 The porch will cover by-and-bye;
 And where we plant this chrysalis
 A poppy's banneret will fly.
 You know the saw, "All work, no play,"
 But when the glance of smug Christina
 (Hang chaperons!) is bent our way,
 I'm making garden with Selena.

I love the soil, but never knew
 Such pleasure lay in planting flowers.
 O Springtime, play the laggard, do!
 Make seconds minutes, minutes hours,
 Hours days, and I'll sing lustily
 Your praises in a smart sestina.
 I'd have each day a week! You see,
 I'm making garden with Selena.

EDWARD W. BARNARD.



AN APT PREMONITION

O'BEETLE—Do you know, I had a premonition that a burglar would steal
 my watch last night.

O'BOTTLE—How was that?

O'BEETLE—Why, I noticed, when I went to bed, that it was going; and it
 was gone when I got up.

THE TRAGIC SPARK

A COMEDY OF TO-DAY

By Richard Duffy

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

CHARLES GLYN-TALBOT, *prosperous, phlegmatic lawyer, about forty-two years of age, handsome and dignified.*

MRS. CHARLES GLYN-TALBOT, *his wife, age about twenty-seven, pretty, and intensely in love with her husband.*

MRS. FELICIA BIDGOOD, *a widow, buxom and vivacious, weary of her state.*

REV. ARTHUR LOFTIN, *strenuous and robust young clergyman.*

MISS SOPHIA GLYN-TALBOT, *sister of CHARLES, about forty-five, a fat, bustling old maid, with psychic gifts.*

FELIX, *French butler, stout, and sad in visage.*

A. D. T. MESSENGER, No. 7604, *short, shriveled, hairless cheeks, about forty-seven years old, who has lost his voice.*

ACT I

SCENE—*The library of Mr. GLYN-TALBOT at half-past nine in the morning. Rise of curtain reveals Mr. GLYN-TALBOT seated at table. Silver coffee-service, empty cup and broken roll on tray in front of him. Two law-books open at left hand. He is reading in one. Newspapers opened, magazines, etc., on table. Door at right and at left.*

CHARLES, *sipping the last of his coffee, mumbles half aloud as he studies case in law-book.*

BESSIE (*entering from left with a look of inquiry that breaks into a smile as she sees him*)—Oh, there you are, dear.

CHARLES, *too deeply occupied to notice her, continues mumbling half-aloud.*

BESSIE (*with a note of incipient impatience*)—I waited ten minutes in the dining-room. I wanted to have my coffee with you.

CHARLES *takes book in his hand,*

lays it on his knees, folios it madly, turning his back to her and mumbling louder than before.

BESSIE (*in a ready-to-sob tone*)—I don't feel very well, Charles.

CHARLES *mumbles still louder than ever and turns pages excitedly. The heavy volume slips from his grasp and slides to the floor with a crash.*

BESSIE (*running round to him and dropping in front on her knees*)—Let me pick it up, Charles. (*Hands book to him and keeps her arms out, as if inviting him to raise her.*)

CHARLES (*truly surprised*)—What, you here, Bessie! I thought you were fast asleep. (*Turns again to his book.*)

BESSIE (*lowering her hands and rising, aggrieved*)—I've been talking to you for half an hour, and you never paid the least notice.

CHARLES (*with no sense of humor*)—Why didn't you tell me you were here?

BESSIE—After this I'll have Felix announce me. (*Goes to door and imitates butler.*) Mrs. Charles Glyn-Talbot.

CHARLES (*standing up and glancing mechanically at watch*)—What a clever little woman you are!

BESSIE (*sweeping over to him to be kissed*)—Darling, do you know what day this is?

CHARLES (*abstractedly*)—Wednesday, my dear Bessie, and half-past nine. (*Glances at watch again.*) And I must be in court at ten. (*Moves to side and touches button.*) A case involving millions.

BESSIE (*disappointedly*)—It's our wedding anniversary, Charles.

CHARLES — Why, nonsense, my dar——

BESSIE—Six months ago to-day we were married.

CHARLES (*humoring her*)—So we were. I hadn't thought of it.

FELIX (*at door on left*)—Monsieur did ring?

CHARLES—Did you call a hansom, Felix?

FELIX — The hansom does wait, m'sieu'.

CHARLES—My coat, Felix—the medium weight. One moment. (*Goes to window and glances out, turns around.*) It looks cloudy. Get my rain coat.

FELIX (*retiring at left*)—*Bien, m'sieu'.*

BESSIE (*longingly*)—Dearie!

CHARLES—Good-bye, Bessie. (*Kisses her perfunctorily.*)

BESSIE (*half holding out her arms*)—Haven't you a single—single word about—about——?

CHARLES—About what, my dear?

BESSIE—Our—our—anniversary.

CHARLES—Why, of course. I wish you many happy returns—that is—I hope we shall have many happy returns. Good-bye. (*Takes up law-books and moves away.*)

BESSIE—Aren't you going to kiss me good-bye? (*Moves a step after him.*)

CHARLES (*argumentatively*)—Why, I did, Bessie.

BESSIE (*coldly*)—Shall we have the Rev. Mr. Loftin to dinner?

CHARLES (*annoyed at being delayed, but outwardly calm*)—When, my dear?

BESSIE—To-night, of course.

CHARLES—Why to-night?

BESSIE (*plaintively vexed*)—Because he married us.

CHARLES (*absently*)—So he did. I hadn't thought of it.

BESSIE—And Mrs. Bidgood?

CHARLES—Have anybody you like, my dear; but let me go now, please. Good-bye. (*Rushes off at left.*)

BESSIE *follows his steps to the doorway. Stares after him a few seconds, her face puckering as if for a good cry. Compresses her lips and becomes angry instead. Finally, with a spiteful but pretty sticking-out of her tongue, she turns round and sulks across the room. Sweeps some magazines and papers off table to floor. Her hand stops at the tray. She picks up his cup.*

BESSIE (*looking round the rim critically*)—I wonder what place his lips touched. . . . It must be here. (*Puts rim to her lips, kisses it, and then lays cup down with a little whiff of distaste at the touch of it.*)

FELIX (*at door on left*)—Madame.

BESSIE—What is it?

FELIX—Mrs. Felicia Bidgood, madame.

BESSIE—You can show her in here.

FELIX (*about to go*)—*Bien, madame.*

BESSIE—But first pick up these papers and take away the service.

FELIX—*Bien, madame. (Stoops rheumatically and picks up papers, arranges them and piles dishes on tray.)*

BESSIE (*who has seated herself at escritoire and begun to write*)—When you go out this morning, Felix, I wish you to leave a note at the Rev. Mr. Loftin's. (*Goes on writing.*)

FELIX (*getting ready with tray in hand to leave*)—I will come to take the note, madame.

BESSIE—Mr. Loftin and Mrs. Bidgood dine with us to-night.

FELIX—*Bien, madame.*

BESSIE—Design a perfect dinner, Felix. It is our wedding— (*Stops abruptly.*)

FELIX (*after pause, solemnly*)—Madame, it shall be a *symphonie culinaire*.

FELICIA (*runs in at left just as FELIX is about to go out, tray in hand. FELIX swings, escaping her narrowly. Looks*

back at her despairingly and disappears at left)—Good morning, Bessie.

BESSIE—Good morning, Felicia.

FELICIA—Felix was gone so long I was afraid he'd come back with word that you were out.

BESSIE—I wanted the place straightened a bit before asking you in.

FELICIA (*becoming aware of BESSIE'S jaded air, approaches and takes her hands*)—Why, whatever is wrong, dear?

BESSIE (*wearily*)—Oh, nothing.

FELICIA—I know. (*Smiles.*) You've had coffee for breakfast, and it makes you feel as if your brain were full of blotting-paper.

BESSIE—Please don't make fun of me, Felicia.

FELICIA (*kissing her impetuously*)—Make fun of you? How unkind! I was only diagnosing you. Now I'll prescribe.

BESSIE—Ah, thank you, Felicia. (*Strokes her cheek.*) I knew I could count on you. (*Lets her head fall on FELICIA'S shoulder.*)

FELICIA—My dear Bessie, you talk as if I'd saved your reputation.

BESSIE—You don't know how much you've done for me.

FELICIA—No, dear, I don't.

BESSIE—I felt like killing myself before you came.

FELICIA (*after pause and sharp look at BESSIE, sitting down*)—Oh, is that it? I've saved your life. (*Pause.*) You're more than welcome, dear.

BESSIE (*disconsolately, as she drops into chair*)—He may drive me to it yet.

FELICIA (*after pause, her face knotted in doubt*)—Is he—er—tall, Bessie?

BESSIE—Of course he's tall. (*Looking blankly at floor.*)

FELICIA—Dark?

BESSIE—You should know, Felicia; you've seen him often enough.

FELICIA—And you've been married only six months.

BESSIE (*tragically*)—Six months today.

FELICIA—It wouldn't look well in print, would it?

BESSIE—It's too horrible, and I'm sure it's all his fault. (*Sobs and rises to her feet wofully.*)

FELICIA (*rising and embracing her tenderly*)—I'm sure, my poor dear, it isn't yours.

BESSIE (*turning away toward window*)—I wish I were dead!

FELICIA (*looking after her*)—Bessie, dear, would you mind telling me—that is—er—I'll try and guess it—er—if you'll give me the initials.

BESSIE (*in surprise, returning forward toward FELICIA*)—Guess what?

FELICIA—His name! You haven't mentioned it.

BESSIE—His name? His name?

FELICIA—Oh, you needn't tell me if—

BESSIE—Why, it's Charles—my husband! (*Falls into FELICIA'S arms in an outburst of tears, while FELICIA, her face toward audience, endeavors to smother her laughter in coughing.*)

FELICIA (*after pause leads BESSIE to divan, where both sit*)—Now, dear, listen to me. But first stop crying. It spoils your pretty eyes.

BESSIE—I can't stop.

FELICIA—Then take a rest at least.

BESSIE—All right. (*Gradually ceases.*)

FELICIA—No woman should waste tears on her husband. They're a luxury to be reserved for something she hasn't got and daren't have—a lover, for instance.

BESSIE—I'd like to have one just to anger him.

FELICIA (*shamming shock*)—Phew, Bessie!

BESSIE—Well, I don't mean to have one, but just to—

FELICIA—Make him think you're on the point of—

BESSIE—No, no, Felicia. That's silly and wrong.

FELICIA—Nothing that's wrong is silly, my dear, though it may be uncomfortable. What's good is often—

BESSIE—I'm the biggest silly in New York. I know it.

FELICIA—Well, if you insist. But let me tell you something.

BESSIE—Please don't, Felicia. My head is like a sieve this morning.

FELICIA—Let me strain just one idea through it. (*Takes paper out of*

pocket-book.) Now you must, Bessie, this is the prescription.

BESSIE (*wearily*)—Very well.

FELICIA (*unfolding paper*)—My French teacher, Monsieur Dupin, is reading with me the most delicious novel. "*Vièrge et Femme*," it's called. Now, there's a woman in this book whose husband is a—a—a—well, a stupid.

BESSIE (*brightening*)—Yes.

FELICIA—And his wife's intensely in love with him.

BESSIE (*still more interested*)—Yes. Hurry, Felicia.

FELICIA—And she doesn't know what to do

BESSIE (*leaning forward, absorbed*)—"And she doesn't know what to do."

FELICIA—So, one day—

BESSIE—Yes, yes, I understand.

FELICIA—she sits down and writes—oh, yes, I forgot; she writes in a disguised hand on some paper with a noble crest—

BESSIE—What did she write? Quick, please, Felicia. (*Stands up, palpitant.*)

FELICIA—Be calm, Bessie. This is all in a book. It's a story.

BESSIE (*sitting down, wearily*)—Oh, I forgot.

FELICIA—She writes some maxims on love, addressed "To You."

BESSIE—To me?

FELICIA—No, no. That's what she wrote at the top of the page, and she signed them "A. L.," which were the initials of a gay young count her husband knew.

BESSIE—Good gracious! What did she do next?

FELICIA—She gave the paper to her husband, as she picked it out of her mail one morning, and said to him: "Dear, how absurd this is!"

BESSIE—And her husband?

FELICIA—Her husband? Why, the clam stewed for six hours and tried to challenge the count to a duel.

BESSIE—Did they fight?

FELICIA—No; his wife persuaded him to ignore the letter, but he loved her watchfully then, and they lived happy ever after.

BESSIE (*disillusioned*)—But that happened in France.

FELICIA—Of course it did. But I had Monsieur Dupin translate the maxims into English and make two copies—one for me and one for you. Do you still keep your scrap-book?

BESSIE—No; I burned it the morning I was married.

FELICIA (*handing paper*)—Begin a new one, my dear—a married woman's scrap-book—and make it a good one by putting this on the first page.

BESSIE (*taking paper and glancing at it, not very interested*)—I don't think Charles would be jealous, no matter what I did. (*Lays paper on escritoire.*)

FELICIA—Well, my dear, the world moves fast and they're doing things better every day. But there's been no improvement on the old-fashioned way to catch a loose horse in pasture.

BESSIE—What's that?

FELICIA—Offer him a measure he thinks has oats in it.

BESSIE—Ah, Felicia, you're a theorist. You're free and untrammelled; you haven't a husband.

FELICIA—I have hopes.

BESSIE—Felicia, you're joking.

FELICIA—No; I'm thinking. The Rev. Mr. Loftin proposed for the third time yesterday afternoon. I reserved decision.

BESSIE—Of course you'll refuse him.

FELICIA—Perhaps, Bessie; but three is a fatal number for me.

BESSIE—My dear Felicia, don't be rash. Love is all right, so is romance; but only a fool thinks that love and romance can last more than six months after marriage.

FELICIA—Why, Bessie, how good you are at figures!

BESSIE—A man may come to have affection for his wife. More frequently he respects her. Generally he is simply her husband.

FELICIA—Well, my dear, that's something (*rising*), especially to a widow weary of her state.

BESSIE (*after pause, and bitterly*)—What wild wine love is, Felicia!

FELICIA—The oldest vintage in the world, my dear. It ought to be.

BESSIE—Six months ago I thought as you do.

FELICIA—Now?

BESSIE—Shall I say it? No; it wouldn't be kind.

FELICIA—At least you ought to try to save me.

BESSIE—Well, then, I am convinced of two things, Felicia. All men are brutes, all women fools!

FELICIA (*after pause*)—Strong words, my dear. But I agree with you entirely.

BESSIE—You agree with me—and yet—

FELICIA—And yet, Bessie, I believe—why, I know—that a brute and a fool trot better in team than a brute or a fool trots single. I've been trotting single for seven years and I begin to feel that some brutality, thoughtful, unexpected, husbandly brutality, would do me good. I'm going all to seed because nobody abuses me.

BESSIE—But Charles never abuses me. He just doesn't notice me.

FELICIA—You must make him, Bessie. Spoil his dinners. Be late for church, for the theatre, for trains; take dinner with me without letting him know where you are. Give away his new fur coat to some poor, deserving family. Get a new cook every week.

BESSIE—I might try some of those things.

FELICIA—Do anything, but don't cry over him. Don't let him see how much you care for him.

BESSIE—Felicia, darling, you're wonderful. I'll begin to-night. Come to dine with us, won't you?

FELICIA—And you begin to-night! Nay, nay, my dear, a bad dinner is a tragedy for me. One dines but once a day; and a dinner lost can never be regained.

BESSIE—Oh, I'll have a beautiful dinner to-night, and to-morrow I'll discharge the cook. I've asked Mr. Loftin to come.

FELICIA (*smiling*)—You have? (*Pause.*) Seven sharp, isn't it?

BESSIE—Seven sharp. (*Steps to wall where she presses button.*)

FELICIA—Bessie, dear, may I ask a service of you?

BESSIE—You ask, Felicia? Surely you—

FELICIA—You won't forget, will you, please. After dinner—er—see—that is, try to see to it that Mr. Loftin doesn't speak to me alone.

BESSIE—Why, Felicia?

FELICIA—I know it looks silly, but you know I'm not ready to—

BESSIE (*laughs heartily*)—Oh, Felicia, you're so funny!

FELICIA—'Sh! (*Points at door.*)

FELIX (*at door on left*)—Madame did ring?

BESSIE (*putting sheet of paper in envelope and sealing*)—This is the note for Mr. Loftin, Felix.

FELIX—I go just now, madame.

BESSIE—That is all.

FELIX—Madame, Mademoiselle Glyn-Talbot is arrived.

BESSIE (*turning to FELICIA*)—Charles's sister. (*To FELIX.*) Show her in here.

FELICIA—I must be off. Good-bye, dear.

BESSIE—Please don't go, Felicia. I can't stand her alone this morning.

FELICIA—But, my dear, there's a sale of laces at Sellingman's. It begins at ten. (*Looks at watch.*) I wouldn't miss it for anything.

BESSIE—Please, Felicia, just ten minutes.

FELICIA—Ten minutes the limit, Bessie. I wouldn't miss that—

FELIX (*announces*)—Mademoiselle Glyn-Talbot.

SOPHIA (*bursting in door at left, puffing*)—Good morning, my dear, and many happy—oh (*seeing FELICIA*), I beg your pardon!

BESSIE—Good morning, Sophia. Don't you remember Mrs. Bidgood?

SOPHIA—Of course I do. Why, we met at Charles's wedding.

FELICIA—I am pleased to see you again.

SOPHIA—And I've come in just for a moment, Bessie, to wish you and Charles many happy returns.

BESSIE—Of what, Sophia?

SOPHIA (*puffing exclamation*)—Of what, my dear? Why, of Charles's wedding—that is, of your wedding and Charles's.

FELICIA (*with quiet smile at BESSIE*)—Forgive me, Bessie. Here I've been talking about your married life, and forgot entirely to congratulate you.

BESSIE (*smiling in kind*)—Thank you, Felicia.

SOPHIA—Six months ago to-day. (*Kisses BESSIE.*) My, how time flies! And yet what a long while ago it seems since I lost Charles!

BESSIE (*tired*)—Yes, it does seem long.

FELICIA—Bessie, you discourage me.

SOPHIA—Discourage you, Mrs. Bidgood? Why, surely you're not thinking of marriage?

FELICIA—A widow, Miss Glyn-Talbot, is the riskiest stock in the matrimonial market.

SOPHIA—Ah, I guessed it. Do you know, friends, I think I'm psychic.

BESSIE and FELICIA (*scarcely interested*)—Really!

SOPHIA—Now, when I left Scarborough this morning, with no notion whatever of coming to see you, Bessie, something told me inwardly, "Go to see Charles's wife."

BESSIE (*in a bored tone*)—Wonderful!

FELICIA (*lightly ironic*)—How curious!

SOPHIA—"But why?" I asked myself; and the same words rang again in my brain: "Go to see Charles's wife." And then, in a flash, it struck me. They're six months married to-day! And so I'm here; but I must be going at once, for there's a lace-sale at Sellingman's at ten that I wouldn't miss for the world.

FELICIA (*to BESSIE, sotto voce*)—And you kept me here for this!

SOPHIA—Good morning, Mrs. Bidgood.

FELICIA—Good-bye. You would better hurry. It's ten minutes to ten now.

SOPHIA—I've a hansom at the

door, and the horse is fresh from the stable. Good-bye, Bessie. (*Kisses her.*)

BESSIE—Come and dine with us to-night, Sophia, will you? Your room is ready, you know.

SOPHIA—So good of you. (*Kisses her again.*) And what a sweet thought to keep my room always ready! Charles is not quite lost to me. Good-bye. (*Goes out door at left, puffing.*)

BESSIE—Felicia, if Charles was only as fond of kissing me as Sophia is, life would be easier.

FELICIA (*looking at watch*)—Bessie, she has a hansom. My automobile is at the door. But I'll have to miss the elevator she goes down in. My dear friend, if she gets to that sale before I do I'll never forgive you. Good-bye. (*Shakes hands.*) Cheer up now, won't you?

BESSIE (*seeing FELICIA to door at left*)—I'll try, Felicia. Till to-night. Seven sharp. (*Stands at door, watching FELICIA go down the hall. Returns across the room; picks up paper from the table, and passes to window; looks out, holding curtain aside. She turns again to table, where she sits to read. Glances over pages, holding them outstretched in her hands and occasionally turning page.*) It is beginning to rain. Felicia marry Mr. Loftin! (*Turns page.*) Marry a minister! (*Yawns.*) What a rash choice! She can't stand children—she told me so herself. (*Yawns.*) What a bore Sophia is—with her psychic notions and Charles's wedding; Charles's wedding—as if I wasn't even among those present. I suppose if— (*Suddenly reads aloud:*) "Sellingman's at ten o'clock sharp. Sale of rare laces." (*Jumps up, throwing paper on table.*) I'll go down there myself. Why should they monopolize this sale? And I'll spend just as much as I can, and send the bill to Charles—Charles! Charles! I think it's a horrid name—and to-morrow morning I discharge the cook, and the first chance I— (*She is turning to go out, when ARTHUR LOFTIN rushes in wildly at left.*)

LOFTIN—Pardon my intrusion, Mrs. Glyn-Talbot. (*Strides across the room.*)

BESSIE (*amazed, but calm*)—Not at all. Be seated, Mr. Loftin.

LOFTIN (*excitedly*)—I did not wait to be announced, madam. (*She offers him a chair.*) No, I thank you. I cannot sit; I cannot stand; I cannot think. (*Turns away anguished, with hand to brow.*) Oh, it is terrible!

BESSIE—Will you have a glass of water, Mr. Loftin?

LOFTIN (*sternly*)—Madam, this is no jesting matter.

BESSIE—I must confess I haven't seen the joke yet—but then I'm a woman.

LOFTIN (*after pause, during which he glares at her*)—Madam, will you sit down, please?

BESSIE—This is my home, Mr. Loftin.

LOFTIN—True, alas, too true!

BESSIE—That's just the way I feel this morning.

LOFTIN (*in a clerical tone*)—And I am your spiritual master, am I not?

BESSIE—You are very kind, Mr. Loftin. And if you prefer to stand, why, do so. (*She seats herself.*) Only let me know as soon as you can where the fire is.

LOFTIN (*stares at her a moment with pent-up feeling*)—Where the fire is? Ah, that is the word—fire, cruel, evil flames of passion.

BESSIE (*springs to her feet and runs down to the front beside him*)—I beg your pardon, Mr. Loftin, but are you making love to me?

LOFTIN—Madam, forgive me, but are you unintelligent, or are you simply mad?

BESSIE—I don't wonder Felicia asked not to be left alone with you.

LOFTIN—Cease, madam; do not profane the name of a good woman.

BESSIE (*attempting to pass him to go out at right*)—Mr. Loftin, I bid you good morning.

LOFTIN (*standing in her way and holding letter before her face*)—Answer one question.

BESSIE (*attempting to take letter*)—Is this for me?

LOFTIN—Is that your writing?

BESSIE—It is my writing.

LOFTIN—You sent this to me?

BESSIE (*perfectly calm*)—I did.

LOFTIN (*wrenching enclosure from envelope and holding it before her*)—And you put this enclosure in that envelope (*holding one in each hand*).

BESSIE (*stares at sheet of enclosure, with growing look of horror*)—Oh, heavens!—I beg your pardon, Mr. Loftin. It is all a mistake. Give me the paper, please. (*Attempts to take it.*)

LOFTIN (*avoiding her effort*)—No, madam, not until—

BESSIE—Give it to me, sir; it is mine.

LOFTIN (*calmly*)—According to law, madam, it is mine.

BESSIE—But you must give it to me—you must.

CHARLES *steps into the room at left, unheard. Stares at them in amazement; unnoticed by them.*

LOFTIN—I cannot give it to you, madam.

BESSIE (*persuasive and anxious*)—Oh, please, Mr. Loftin. Please give it to me.

CHARLES (*taking letter out of LOFTIN'S hand from behind, while LOFTIN instinctively thrusts envelope into his pocket with the other hand, in attempting to save the letter*)—Give it to me, Mr. Loftin.

BESSIE *runs to divan and throws herself on it, burying her face in pillow. LOFTIN stares at CHARLES. CHARLES glances down the sheet, his face purpling with rage. He looks at BESSIE and LOFTIN, glaring, then strides across the room and presses button.*

CHARLES—Your name is Arthur Loftin, I believe.

LOFTIN (*in a daze*)—I think—that is, yes, sir.

CHARLES—Your initials, then, are A. L. (*Looks at paper.*)

LOFTIN (*as if hypnotized*)—Yes, sir.

FELIX (*at door on left*)—Monsieur did ring?

CHARLES—Show Mr. Loftin out, Felix.

LOFTIN (*reeling as if horror-struck*)—My dear Mr. Glyn-Talbot, surely you'll allow me to—

CHARLES (*pointing to door*)—Good morning, sir.

LOFTIN *goes out, at left, walking blindly.* CHARLES, *seated at table, reads, while BESSIE begins to sob with her face in pillow.*

To You

It is not what a man avows, but what he reserves, that interests a woman.

He that deceives suffers more than he that is deceived. Ignorance is bliss, in love as in other matters.

Every man in love has lucid moments when he is persuaded that he is making a fool of himself. The woman convinces him to the contrary. That is part of her charm.

There are three kinds of women: those that are good, those that are bad, and those that are discreet. Discreet women have shaped the destiny of empires.

CHARLES (*jumping to his feet in a rage and ringing for FELIX*)—This stuff reads like a page from a French novel—and a minister wrote it. Bah!

FELIX (*at door on left*)—Monsieur did ring?

CHARLES—I'll have luncheon at twelve, Felix—a chop and some ale.

FELIX—*Bien, monsieur.*

CHARLES (*pulling some law-books from case*)—I shall be reading here. Call me when it is ready.

FELIX—*Bien, monsieur.*

CHARLES—Madam will take luncheon in her room. . . . She is not well.

BESSIE (*springing from divan and brushing away the last sign of tears from an angry face*)—Felix, madam desires a cab—coupé—at once.

FELIX (*after a moment's hesitation*)—*Bien, madame.* (*Goes away at left.*)

CHARLES—Where are you going?

BESSIE (*quavering, in a voice she tries to make firm*)—Why should I tell you—now?

CHARLES—That's so. (*Turns away bitterly.*) It doesn't matter now.

BESSIE (*going after him*)—But you shall know, unjust, unkind, unmanly as you are! (*Growing hysterical*)—because—because I'm going to tell you.

CHARLES—I may be all you accuse me of—still, I am not unfaithful.

BESSIE (*bursting into a flood of tears*)—You'll be sorry for that some day.

CHARLES—Madam, I am sorry now.

BESSIE (*weeping, as she is about to go*)—Good-bye. Good-bye.

CHARLES (*sternly*)—Where are you going?

BESSIE (*between sobs*)—I'm going—I'm going—I'm going to the lace-sale at Sellingman's.

CHARLES—Wha-a-a-a-t!

BESSIE (*as she goes out at left and swings door behind her*)—Good-bye.

CHARLES (*sternly*)—Bessie!

(*The door slams heavily.*)

CHARLES (*appealingly*)—Bessie!

QUICK CURTAIN.

ACT II

SCENE—*Library, same as Act I. Time, 6.30 in the evening. Same day. Curtains drawn, and one lamp in forward corner of room is lighted. Packages and bundles of all shapes and sizes strewn on chairs and tables of room. When the curtain is completely raised CHARLES enter: from door on right. He is in evening dress. In the semi-obscurity he picks his way across the room, knocking some packages off table. Finds button, which he presses, causing all the incandescent lamps in the room to flash into light.*

CHARLES (*staring around at packages*)—Great Cæsar's ghost! where did they all come from? (*Picks up nearest bundle and reads.*) Mrs. Charles Glyn-Talbot. (*Picks up another and reads the same.*) Why, Bessie must be—she must have— (*touching button for FELIX*). Felix might have left them in some other room.

FELIX (*at door on left*)—*Bien, m'sieu'.*

CHARLES—Are all these packages for us, Felix?

FELIX—*Bien, m'sieu'.*

CHARLES—Why did you bring them here?

FELIX—M'sieu', it is ze command of madame—

CHARLES (*eagerly*)—You've heard from her?

FELIX—At two o'clock, m'sieu'; she have command by ze telephone zat

all ze packages be deposited in the librairie.

CHARLES (*inquisitively*)—Madame has not telephoned—that is, she has sent no further orders?

FELIX—*Mais oui*, m'sieu'.

CHARLES—You say you've heard from her—that is, she has sent you orders?

FELIX—Every man zat bring a package, he say to me, "Madame demands zat zis package be poot in ze librairie, see?"

CHARLES—Yes.

FELIX—But I do not see, razzer I hear, and I poot zem in ze librairie affaire ze command of madame.

CHARLES—Is that all?

FELIX—Zirty-zree of zem, m'sieu'—zere could be not more.

CHARLES (*hesitatingly*)—Madame has not returned yet?

FELIX—Not yet, m'sieu'. (*Echoing CHARLES's inflection on "yet."*)

CHARLES (*looking at watch*)—Felix, call Miss Glyn-Talbot on the 'phone. You know the number?

FELIX—Zirty-zix A Scarboro, m'sieu', but—

CHARLES (*lighting cigarette, which he puffs nervously*)—Very well.

FELIX—*Mille fois pardon*, m'sieu', but Mademoiselle Sopheea is here—no, not under zis roof, but in ze citee. She have arrive zis morning. She have gone to ze shops.

CHARLES—Is she coming back here?

FELIX—Madame have invite her for *dîner*.

CHARLES (*crustily*)—But is she coming?

SOPHIA (*outside*)—I'll be late for dinner—I'll be late for dinner, and Charles will never forgive me. (*Enters door at left.*) Ah, my own dear little darling Charles! (*Embraces him enthusiastically.*)

CHARLES (*ominously*)—I'm glad you're here, Sophia. I need your kind heart.

FELIX—M'sieu' desire—

CHARLES—That is all, Felix.

SOPHIA—One moment, Felix. I left some packages in the hall. Will you have them put in my room?

FELIX—*Bien*, mademoiselle. (*Aside, going out at left:*) Zees package beesness begin to eat my nerfs.

CHARLES (*holding chair for her*)—Will you sit down, Sophia?

SOPHIA (*gushingly*)—How thoughtful you always are, Charles!

CHARLES (*laying hand on her arm*)—You inspire me, sister.

SOPHIA (*sitting*)—My! how good it feels to sit down! I'm worn out, Charles. I shopped like a mad woman till four o'clock. Then I spent an hour with old Mrs. Stockbridge, who has something the matter with her throat—

CHARLES (*plainly bored*)—Is that so? (*Goes to door at left and pulls it shut.*)

SOPHIA—It's perfect agony to talk with her. Every word's like a death-gasp. Then I rode up-town in the train and had to stand all the way in a car packed with savages attired in the habiliments of men!

CHARLES (*lighting another cigarette and trying not to show he is bored*)—Why didn't you hire a cab?

SOPHIA—I couldn't find one. Mrs. Stockbridge lives in a cabless district—no carriages there except for funerals or marriages. Oh, that reminds me, my dear Charles. I haven't congratulated you on your wedding anniversary. You're six months married to-day.

CHARLES (*acutely but painfully interested*)—That's so, Sophia, six months to-day. (*Turns away from her toward the window.*)

SOPHIA (*not noticing how far away he is*)—I've seen lonely hours since then, brother. . . . But I'm glad you're married. . . . Bessie's not all she might be, but she's more than I expected. (*Now seeing where he is*) Why, Charles, you're not listening to a word I say!

CHARLES (*turning*)—"Better than you expected." Isn't that what you said last?

SOPHIA—Of course, Charles, if I tire you by speaking candidly about your wife, who, after all, is only a woman—

CHARLES (*approaching her*)—Forgive me, Sophia, if I seem inattentive. I'm troubled to-night.

SOPHIA (*after a pause and eying him critically*)—Charles!

CHARLES—Yes, Sophia.

SOPHIA—Charles, you know I have always thought that I have the psychic gift.

CHARLES (*lighting another cigarette*)—Yes, Sophia.

SOPHIA—Now, I'm going to tell you what is causing your trouble.

CHARLES—Oh, I'm not afraid to tell it to you, Sophia.

SOPHIA—Charles, be open, now—it's copper, isn't it?

CHARLES—What's copper, Sophia?

SOPHIA—Your trouble—you've been squeezed in copper.

CHARLES (*smiling*)—This time your psychic gift deceives you, Sophia.

SOPHIA—It isn't copper? It must be! Something tells me it must be; or, it will be, Charles. Remember my words.

CHARLES (*handing paper he takes from pocket*)—Sophia, will you read this?

SOPHIA (*reading*)—"To you—It is not what a man avows—" (*Reads the first few words of each pensée with increasing wonder.*) Oh, Charles, where did you get this? (*Rises.*)

CHARLES—Sophia, you don't mean to tell me you've seen it before?

SOPHIA (*after pause and biting her lips*)—Well, Charles—

CHARLES—Tell me, Sophia, quickly. Have you seen this before?

SOPHIA—My dear brother, be calm. You frighten me.

CHARLES—But tell me, tell me, have you seen it before?

SOPHIA (*shamefacedly*)—I have. (*Puts paper up to her eyes.*)

CHARLES—Where?

SOPHIA (*bracing herself*)—Charles, I suppose I ought to have told you long ago, but I didn't—though I don't know why.

CHARLES—You ought to have told me what?

SOPHIA—That I'm studying French again, and my professor, Madame

Loyeux, a very fine scholar and a perfect little lady, a widow, is reading a book with me called (*hesitatingly*)—called—well, I can't remember the title of it.

CHARLES—And these maxims are in that book?

SOPHIA—I believe they are, Charles, but as I am reading the book merely for the language and not for the matter in it, of course I don't pay much attention to such passages.

CHARLES—But the lines seem familiar?

SOPHIA—Yes, brother. Charles, you're not angry with me, are you?

CHARLES—No, Sophia, I'm obliged to you.

SOPHIA—Obliged?

CHARLES—Because I now know that the Rev. Arthur Loftin, besides being what he is, is also a plagiarist.

SOPHIA—But, Charles, he's the most popular young preacher in New York.

CHARLES—Popular, eh? Well, call him that, if you like. I repeat that, besides being what he is, he is also a plagiarist.

SOPHIA (*floundering*)—But, surely, Charles, he never preached such ideas as these! (*Holds the paper to him.*)

CHARLES (*taking it and striding across the room*)—No, no; but he sent them to my wife, signed with his own initials. Good heavens, Sophia! he brought them here! And I came in unexpectedly and found her begging him to let her have the paper. (*Folds it nervously and rams it into his pocket.*)

SOPHIA—Mercy of heaven! Charles, what are you telling me? (*Drops into chair.*)

CHARLES (*pretending to be self-possessed*)—Be calm, Sophia. It's nothing unusual. It's only extremely modern. (*Laughs low and cynically.*) A minister taking texts from a malodorous French novel!

SOPHIA—Brother, I wish you'd please remember that your sister is reading that novel!

CHARLES—Sophia, I wish you to understand that that novel has been the cause of a terrible rupture between my wife and me.

SOPHIA—Merciful heavens, Charles!

CHARLES—After I told Mr. Loftin to leave my house this morning, Bessie and I had a bitter quarrel. She left here then, and——

SOPHIA—And you've had no sign from her since?

CHARLES—None—except these few things she bought at the stores.

SOPHIA—Do you think she's going to Europe, Charles?

CHARLES—Why should she go to Europe?

SOPHIA—Because she's bought so many things. I suppose they're all charged to you.

CHARLES—Of course they're all charged to me.

SOPHIA (*rising*)—Well, if there's going to be a separation, it does seem the least bit indelicate to pile up bills on you at the last hour.

CHARLES (*about to light new cigarette*)—But we're not going to separate.

SOPHIA—You're not going to separate?—after what has happened between her and Mr. Loftin?

CHARLES (*dropping cigarette, and brutally calm*)—Sophia, who told you anything happened between her and Mr. Loftin? (*glaring at her*).

SOPHIA (*bursting into tears*)—Now, Charles, if you scold me like that, I'll—— (*Knock at door.*)

CHARLES—Come in.

FELIX (*opening door*)—Monsieur and Madame Loftin.

SOPHIA—Is he married, Charles?

CHARLES—I don't know, Sophia.

SOPHIA—Oh, that makes it a thousand times worse! It was no book for a minister, anyway.

CHARLES—Felix, tell Mr. Loftin that neither Mrs. Glyn-Talbot nor Mr. Glyn-Talbot is at home, and that you don't know when they will be at home.

FELIX (*goes out, leaving door at left open*)—*Bien, monsieur.*

SOPHIA—Charles, reflect a moment. Would it not be more Christian——

CHARLES—Sophia, I'm less a Christian than a man; and if you will please——

SOPHIA (*goes toward door at right, sobbing*)—If you mean to abuse——

CHARLES—Forgive me, Sophia. (*Leads her back.*) I'm all unstrung.

SOPHIA—My poor boy! Shall I make some tea for you?

CHARLES—Thank you, I prefer a cigarette. (*Takes one.*) And listen, Sophia; we must not let a whisper of this trouble get outside these walls. You must have no confidants, no counselors. You promise?

SOPHIA—Not a word from me, Charles.

FELICIA (*runs into room, startling them both*)—Good evening, friends.

CHARLES (*stealthily to SOPHIA*)—Not a word. Good evening, Mrs. Bidgood.

SOPHIA—Good evening, my dear.

FELICIA—You must excuse me for rushing in like this!

CHARLES and SOPHIA—Not at all! Not at all!

FELICIA—But I must see Bessie at once. Is she in her room? (*As if going to door at right.*) May I go to her?

CHARLES (*after an awkward pause*)—I'm sorry, Mrs. Bidgood, but you cannot see Bessie now.

SOPHIA—It is really too bad, but not now, Mrs. Bidgood.

FELICIA—Cannot see her? Is she ill?

SOPHIA—Oh, no, she's not ill; that is, she——

CHARLES—Pardon me, Sophia. Perhaps I would better explain to Mrs. Bidgood.

FELICIA—Oh, there's something to be explained! Then there's a mystery? (*Plumps herself into chair.*) How delicious! Please explain, Mr. Glyn-Talbot.

SOPHIA (*stealthily to CHARLES*)—She begins to suspect, Charles. Be careful. I think she has the psychic gift.

CHARLES (*to SOPHIA*)—If it's no stronger than yours, Sophia, I'm not afraid.

FELICIA (*getting up, coldly*)—Perhaps it's something you don't wish me to know?

SOPHIA (*sotto voce*)—What did I tell you, Charles?

CHARLES (*frowns first at SOPHIA;*

then smiles at FELICIA)—Not at all, Mrs. Bidgood. Bessie went away suddenly this morning on a matter of family concern. She hasn't come back yet. And she may be detained for some time. It is very simple.

FELICIA—From the packages here, I thought she had been out shopping.

CHARLES—I believe she did buy a few things.

SOPHIA (*to prove it*)—I have been shopping to-day, Mrs. Bidgood.

FELICIA—Yes, I knew it.

SOPHIA (*surprised*)—You did?

FELICIA—I saw you coming to the lace counter at Sellingman's just as I was leaving it. Did you see anything you liked?

SOPHIA—I thought everything they had very shabby. Mere bargains!

FELICIA—I saw things I liked to the sum of seventy-five dollars.

SOPHIA (*semi-ironically*)—After your good taste had been satisfied, Mrs. Bidgood (*at this moment CHARLES goes out door at right, unnoticed*), how could I hope to find anything worth having?

FELICIA (*smiling sweetly*)—You don't mean my taste, you mean my appetite, don't you? Admit it, dear Sophia—do you know, I think we've been friends long enough to use our Christian names. What say you?

SOPHIA—I think "Felicia" is a beautiful name.

FELICIA—"Sophia" is nice, too; only you're nicer! (*Kisses her.*) Sophia, tell me—where's Bessie?

SOPHIA—Felicia, I think I'm really beginning to like you. (*Pause.*) Yes, I am. Something tells me to like you. (*Kisses her.*)

FELICIA—Aren't you the dearest, sweetest old—! (*Stops suddenly.*)

SOPHIA (*bluntly*)—That's what I am—an old maid! I can't say I'm proud of it, Felicia; but I make no attempt to disguise the fact.

FELICIA—And the dearest one on earth! Now, tell me, where's Bessie?

SOPHIA—Why, Charles told you all—

FELICIA—All he wanted to tell. (*Laughs.*) He's a dear, good man,

Sophia; but, like the rest of them, very clumsy at fibbing.

SOPHIA (*solemnly*)—Felicia, I believe you're a mind-reader.

FELICIA—No, not that. But I'll tell you one thing, Sophia; some of the cards in this pack are marked, and I know which ones.

SOPHIA (*astonished*)—Felicia, what do you mean?

FELICIA—Now, I'm going to tell you something else. (*Leading her to chair.*) Be comfortable, dear.

SOPHIA (*sitting*)—Thank you, Felicia.

FELICIA—Sophia, I'm married.

SOPHIA (*jumping up*)—Again!

FELICIA—For the second time.

SOPHIA—Heavenly grace, Felicia!

FELICIA—No; earthly comfort, that's all.

SOPHIA—My dear Felicia, I congratulate you. (*Kisses her.*) Charles (*looking around*)—why, he's gone. Charles!

FELICIA (*pointing to door at right*)—He went away as soon as we began talking laces.

SOPHIA—My dear child, who is the happy man?

FELICIA—First tell me where's Bessie?

SOPHIA—Bessie—Bessie—why—Oh, no, I can't! Not a word! I've promised.

FELICIA—Then I won't tell you whom I married.

SOPHIA—Oh, you must.

FELICIA (*making moue*)—No.

SOPHIA—But I must know. Come with me, quick! I'll ask Charles to tell you about Bessie (*leading toward door at right*).

FELICIA (*going across stage*)—So there is a mystery, Sophia! How perfectly lovely! The beautiful thing about marriage is that it affords so many opportunities for mystery.

As they are about to go out CHARLES enters, confronting them. He is puffing his cigarette nervously. They stand and stare at him as he, perplexed, crosses room.

SOPHIA—Charles, dear, Mrs. Bidgood's married again.

CHARLES (*turning aside, crosses*)—Serves her right.

FELICIA (*ironically*) — Oh, you heartless being!

CHARLES—I beg your pardon, Mrs.—er—ahem. I meant no offense. I was thinking of something else, I assure you.

FELICIA (*with meaning*)—I forgive you, because I know you are not yourself, to-night.

CHARLES (*startled*) — Sophia, you haven't—that is, you remember your promise?

SOPHIA—I remember, Charles.

FELICIA—Sophia remembers perfectly; only she'd like to be allowed to forget.

CHARLES—What do you mean?

FELICIA—Charles—the first time I ever dared call you "Charles," but I'm doing the same thing to everybody, to-night—Charles, wouldn't you like to know the name of the man I married?

CHARLES—To be sure, Felicia; and I shall be glad to know him also, and have you both dine with us.

FELICIA—Not too fast. He may be a man you don't like—a man you hate.

CHARLES—How could I hate any man you love, Felicia?

SOPHIA—Excellent, Charles. Who is he, Felicia?

FELICIA—First, I've got to know all about Bessie; and when I know all there is to tell, I'll tell all I know—

CHARLES (*eagerly*)—Do you know anything about her?

FELICIA— —about my husband. *Pause.*

CHARLES—My dear friends, I must be alone for a few moments. I have a very important letter to write. Sophia, you take Mrs.—er—ahem—if you please, Felicia—

FELICIA (*smiling*)—Mrs. Bidgood that was.

CHARLES—You take "Mrs. Bidgood that was" to your room and tell her the whole story.

FELICIA—How perfectly romantic! Charles, I envy you.

Exit SOPHIA and FELICIA, CHARLES bowing them out.

SOPHIA (*hanging back*)—What are you going to do?

CHARLES—Get the Butts Detective Agency to send a man here.

SOPHIA—My dear boy, think of the newspapers.

CHARLES—They'll see to that. And then, I'm sorry to admit it, but I must have some dinner.

SOPHIA—Bravo, my darling. You're keeping up wonderfully—I'm hungry, too.

CHARLES *closes door after them and presses button for FELIX. Walks up and down a moment. FELIX does not appear. Rings again and lights cigarette. Takes three puffs nervously.*

CHARLES—Wire must be out of order again. (*Goes to door at left and calls.*) Felix! Felix!

FELIX (*in distance*)—*Bien, m'sieu'.*

CHARLES *returns to middle of room. Takes three more puffs nervously, and then flicks cigarette into grate. FELIX appears at door, his arms loaded with bundles.*

CHARLES—Don't bring any more of that rubbish in here!

FELIX—Orders of madame, m'sieu'.

After FELIX, diminutive MESSENGER BOY, about forty-seven years old, staggering under an enormous azalea plant.

CHARLES — Great Cæsar's ghost! This is no storage warehouse!

After MESSENGER BOY, MR. LOFTIN, laden with small bundles, who trips on rug at moment of entering, sending his bundles in all directions. He and MESSENGER BOY and FELIX pick them up. MESSENGER BOY snatches a cigarette butt wherever he sees one.

CHARLES (*to LOFTIN*)—Sir, I sent word to you that I was not at home.

LOFTIN (*stammering*) — I assure you—

CHARLES—I am perfectly aware of your assurance, Mr. Loftin.

At this moment BESSIE staggers in, holding an enormous lamp-shade in one hand, from which the wrapper is half-torn. Her hat is askew, her hair straggling and her general air tired and beaten.

BESSIE—I had as many of the

things sent as I could, but I had to bring some home myself.

CHARLES—Bessie, what in the name of—

BESSIE—Charles, please give some change to that boy.

CHARLES (*hesitates with finger in change pocket*)—But, my dear—

BESSIE—Half a dollar will do.

CHARLES (*giving coin to Boy*)—Young man.

BOY (*in horrible, raucous tone*)—T'anks, mister. (*At door.*) Good night, all. (*Exit Boy.*)

BESSIE—Mr. Loftin, may I ask you to wait a few moments in the reception-room?

LOFTIN—With pleasure—no, I mean—I will— (*Exit LOFTIN.*)

BESSIE—Felix, close the door.

FELIX—*Bien, madame.*

Exit FELIX, closing door, at left.

CHARLES—Now, madam, what are your orders to me?

BESSIE *stares at him a moment, takes a step toward him, then retreats and drops, with an outburst of tears, into nearest chair.*

CHARLES (*laying hand on her arm*)—My dear Bessie, what in the world has happen—?

BESSIE (*between sobs*)—Don't touch me!

CHARLES—My dear wife—

BESSIE (*jumping up and moving away*)—I'm not your dear wife!

Pause, during which CHARLES looks at her in blank amazement and wonders.

CHARLES (*suddenly, and in a roar*)—Madam! Sit down!

BESSIE (*startled at his outburst, and staring at him*)—Wh-a-a-t?

CHARLES (*sternly and loudly*)—Sit down—here—in this chair!

BESSIE (*cowed, moves to chair, haltingly*)—Y-e-e-s, sir!

CHARLES—Now listen to me!

BESSIE (*sobbing*)—Yes!

CHARLES—Are you, or are you not, my wife?

BESSIE (*hysterically*)—I—I—I—think I am.

CHARLES—Yes, or no!

BESSIE—Yes.

CHARLES—Do you, or do you not, love another man?

BESSIE (*with a quick gulp*)—No.

CHARLES—Did you, or did you not, give any cause to that man for sending you—bringing you—that paper?

BESSIE (*stammeringly*)—I—I—it—was—he—he—

CHARLES (*inexorably*)—Yes, or no?

BESSIE—No.

CHARLES (*in amazement*)—You did not?

BESSIE—No, I did not.

CHARLES—Then why, in the name of all that's reasonable, didn't you tell me so this morning?

BESSIE—I—I—he—he—you—er—

CHARLES—Yes, or no.

BESSIE (*looking up at him helplessly*)—What—what shall I say?

CHARLES (*aware of his slip*)—Excuse me; but why didn't you say so this morning?

BESSIE—Because—because—you didn't ask me.

CHARLES (*stupefied for a second*)—Oh, very well. (*Pause.*) Now, why did you bring him here with you to-night?

BESSIE—You mean Mr. Loftin?

CHARLES (*sternly*)—Why did you bring him here to-night?

BESSIE—I didn't bring him here.

CHARLES (*in astonishment*)—You didn't?

BESSIE—I found him in the entrance hall; and he offered to carry some of the bundles.

CHARLES—What was he doing there?

BESSIE—I—I—I forgot to ask him.

CHARLES (*sulkily*)—We'll find that out later.

BESSIE (*dejectedly*)—I'll do my best.

CHARLES—Now, tell me where you've been since morning.

BESSIE—I've been shopping.

CHARLES—These packages and your appearance being the evidence, I presume?

BESSIE (*instinctively pressing her hair above her ears and taking off her hat, which she throws on the divan*)—Yes—I think so.

CHARLES (*inquiringly*)—You have

not been advising with anyone about our trouble?

BESSIE (*gradually approaching a breakdown, rises and gets nearer to him as her speech progresses*)—I went out to try and catch Felicia. She said she was going to a lace-sale at Sellingman's. I couldn't find her. I was cold and sad and angry—wickedly angry. And I wanted revenge for what you had said to me, and I bought everything I could—I spent all the money I could, just because—I—I—hated you. I bought you a dozen tooth-brushes, three sets of hair-brushes, a dozen neckties, three boxes of gloves, some slippers, two dressing-gowns, some razors, some cologne-water, and—oh!—a million other things, all for you—and they'll all be here to-morrow—and, Charles, Charles, I've been so wretched and lonely! (*Falls into his embrace with a calamitous outburst of tears.*)

CHARLES (*after letting her grief have way for a moment*)—My dear Bessie, you are very thoughtful of me. What did you buy for yourself?

BESSIE—A box of bon-bons.

CHARLES (*astonished*)—Is that all?

BESSIE—I think so. No, there was a glass of ice-cream soda, too. I had the soda for luncheon.

CHARLES—My dear, you spend entirely too much on yourself. (*Patting her cheek tenderly.*) You must let me buy for you.

BESSIE (*holding up her face to his, and looking into his eyes confidingly*)—Charles, tell me: why did you come home this morning after you said you were going to be so busy? Did you—?

CHARLES—My dear little woman, the opposing counsel secured a postponement; and I said to myself: "To-day's my wedding anniversary. I'll go home to—"

BESSIE (*kissing him*)—You dear! And you don't doubt me now, do you?

CHARLES—After you've bought all these things for me? How can I?

BESSIE—And you were unreasonable this morning, weren't you?

CHARLES—My dear, a jealous man is always unreasonable.

BESSIE (*in delighted wonder*)—Are you jealous?

CHARLES (*kissing her ardently*)—Jealousy is the tragic spark that sets love blazing.

BESSIE—Oh, sweetheart, now that I know you're jealous, I shall be so happy!

CHARLES—Wha-a-t?

BESSIE—I mean—I mean—I'd like you to be jealous occasionally, Charles, dearie. It does me good.

CHARLES (*wagging finger at her*)—But there must be no real cause.

BESSIE—It isn't necessary. I've suffered just as much to-day as if there was. (*Laying her head on his cheek.*) And I'm glad the day is over.

CHARLES (*patting her on the cheek*)—Darling, I've been very miserable myself.

SOPHIA and FELICIA enter suddenly from door at right, and stand in amazement.

SOPHIA—Of all unaccountable things!

FELICIA (*almost simultaneously*)—Isn't there some mistake?

CHARLES and BESSIE turn, facing them.

CHARLES—The mistake is all explained away.

SOPHIA—I knew it would end thus from the first. Something told me it would.

FELICIA—I don't think all the mistake is explained away.

CHARLES (*dramatically*)—A man that loves his wife needs no explanation but the look of innocence in her eyes.

FELICIA—Poetic, really delightful, my dear Charles, but hardly exact.

LOFTIN bursts into the room, in great excitement.

LOFTIN—Excuse me, one and all, but my patience is at an end. I'll wait no more outside. That French servant is going round in an insane fashion, jabbering in his own language such a heterogeneous mass of words, that, if it is not profanity, then all I can say for French is that

it has a rudely profane sound. (*Dramatically appealing to FELICIA*) Wife of my heart, let us go home!

ALL (*except FELICIA and LOFTIN*)—Wife of his heart! The man must be—

FELICIA—He is!

CHARLES and BESSIE—He is?

SOPHIA—You are?

FELICIA—We are! Just like at school. We were married to-day at three o'clock in the Little Church Around the Corner.

LOFTIN (*seriously*)—The happiest day of my life.

FELICIA (*to LOFTIN*)—Thank you, dear. (*To CHARLES*.) After your horrid accusation of this morning, Charles, and in view of the fact that Mr. Loftin had honored me with a proposal of marriage—

LOFTIN (*to FELICIA, but aloud*)—On three occasions—

FELICIA—there was only one thing to be done.

BESSIE—Brava, Felicia!

FELICIA—It is my opinion that the only safe minister in this town is a married one—and some of them will bear watching.

LOFTIN (*approaching her*)—I am different, am I not, Felicia?

FELICIA—At any rate, you will be, my dear.

BESSIE—Let me congratulate you, Mr. Loftin.

CHARLES—First, allow me to apologize—

FELICIA—One word, if I may interrupt, perhaps half a dozen. But first, everybody must agree and covenant—is that the legal twist, Charles?

CHARLES—Very like it.

FELICIA—Everybody must agree and covenant that nobody is to make any apologies.

ALL (*except CHARLES*)—Agreed.

FELICIA—If there's one thing futile in life it's an apology. It places the one who has inflicted injury in embarrassment before the one who has been injured, thereby exciting sympathy for the man who caused all the trouble. (*Holding paper to*

CHARLES.) Charles, have you ever seen a paper like this?

CHARLES (*examining it*)—Let me—yes, I have.

FELICIA—Of course. It is the duplicate in every respect of one you have in your pocket. (*Smiling*.) Show it to the jury.

CHARLES (*hands FELICIA her paper and produces his own*)—Here it is.

FELICIA (*taking CHARLES's paper*)—These two papers are identical, are they not? (*Shows them on all sides, one in each hand*.)

ALL—Both the same. . . . Yes.

FELICIA—Now, I gave one of these to Bessie for her scrap-book. Instead of putting it in the book, she sent it as an invitation to dinner—by mistake, to be sure—to the Reverend Arthur Loftin, who, being a single and susceptible minister, full of the spirit of his calling, thought he saw a fire where there was only the sign of smoke.

LOFTIN (*in perfect soberness*)—I admit I was over-hasty.

FELICIA—No apologies, dear. Bessie, where's the dinner invitation?

BESSIE (*going to escritoire*)—It must be here. (*Opening it and snatching up sheet of paper*.) Yes. (*Hands paper to FELICIA*.)

FELICIA—No, I thank you. To Mr. Loftin, if you will. He needs it now more than ever.

SOPHIA—Felicia, you're psychic. I'm sure of it.

FELICIA—I'll be seasick, Sophia, if dinner doesn't happen soon.

BESSIE goes to side and presses button.

CHARLES (*approaching LOFTIN and taking his hand*)—My dear friend, how can I tell you how—

FELICIA—How glad you are he's got me—isn't that it?

CHARLES—Well— (*Takes a hand of each in his*.) I wish you both the full measure of happiness and long life.

FELIX (*at door*)—Madame, le dîner est servi.

BESSIE (*as if going out at door on right*)—Give me three minutes, friends

—but don't wait. I must get into youthly, Bessie, dear. Remember, other things. I feel like a *divorcée* in this is a bridal supper. (*Smiling.*) these. Arthur! (*He approaches her.*)

FELICIA — Something white and

QUICK CURTAIN



A WOMAN'S LOVE

BECAUSE, O love, I would be in your eyes
All truth, all sweetness, everything you prize,
Behold, I make a mockery of these,
And dare your doubt by seeming otherwise.

Because, O love, I would not have you guess
The secret of my heart's vast tenderness,
I hide it with a mask of cruel words—
My lips were kinder if my love were less.

Because, O love, I would not have you see
How ever constant is the heart of me,
I smile in many eyes, on many men—
Most am I bound in seeming to be free.

Because, O love, I would in my own breast
Take any wound that you might be at rest,
I crucify you on a cross of fears,
Lash you with scorn and stab you with a jest.

JOHN WINWOOD.



A NATURAL QUESTION

MRS. HOON (*in the midst of her reading*)—Ah! Mrs. Congressman Swackhammer has started a crusade against décolleté gowns.

MR. HOON—H'm! Is Mrs. Congressman Swackhammer sensible or skinny?



MADE THEM HAPPY

“IT'S beastly foggy,” said Cholly.

“Yes, but it's like deah old Lunnon, doncher know,” added Chappie.
“So it is. What bloomin' fine weathaw we're havin'!”



NEWRICH—Wealth has its advantages.

MRS. NEWRICH—Yes, it increases the number of one's inferiors.

SONG OF THE PATH

JUST until the May snow comes,
 Scenting all the sweet Spring day,
 Let us walk together, dear,
 Hand in hand, a little way.

Just until the May snow falls
 In the still fields, let us meet;
 Let me walk and know you near,
 Shadowy through the petals, sweet.

Just until the June-flowers blow—
 Ah, 'tis such a little while!—
 Let my heart delight to beat
 To the music of your smile.

Till the harvest moon—till then
 Let us stay. When poppies die,
 Crushed and crimson in the corn,
 We can bear to say good-bye.

Love, my love, the year is done,
 Wreck of golden hours and days—
 Nowhere in the path we took
 Is there parting of the ways!

ZONA GALE.



AT LEAST

KINGLEY—There's no use in deceiving you—if a burglar got into the house
 I would lock my door and just let him take everything in sight.
 MRS. KINGLEY—Then I have no respect for you.
 “But what else could I do?”
 “You might lie about it.”



REASON ENOUGH

“WHAT reason is there for the notion that it is especially unlucky to
 marry in May?”
 “I don't know, unless it is that an especially large number of people have
 been married in May.”

THROUGH THE MIST OF SUSPICION

By G. Vere Tyler

MIRIAM stood at the window and watched her husband, the doctor, drive off in his coupé. Then she turned suddenly into her room, where she paused for a moment in deep thought.

Presently her lids flashed, as from an awakening. She crossed over to the bureau, and taking from beneath the pin-cushion a carefully secreted note, read it through quickly. After this she stood again in thought, her eyes having unconsciously encountered those of her husband in a life-sized portrait of him over the mantel. The eyes seemed to draw her, and half-dreamily she walked forward and paused beneath them, without having once shifted her stare.

They were unquestionably handsome eyes, set in a handsome face, the face of a scholar and a gentleman. It was not, however, any consideration of his personal appearance that was holding her attention. These physical attributes, once such a delight to her, had become a pain that, even as she gazed at them, she was trying to shut out, to deny. It was his character that she was studying, what it seemed possible that he could withstand or conquer, for the sake of right and for her sake.

Her whole attitude was indicative of suppressed emotion. Her hands were clasped at her back, and her uplifted face was half-worshipful, half-terrified.

"I do not believe," she said, finally, speaking aloud in a low, calm voice, "that any woman ever gave a man such respect—I am not speaking of my love," she hurriedly interjected—

"as I have given you! Until they fairly beat it into my brain, I never found it possible to associate you with any kind of weakness or with serious admiration for any woman except myself. And it is for this," she went on, still deliberately, "that I have been taunted and laughed at, until I am sore to the heart's core."

She dropped into a chair, and let her eyes rest on the low fire in the grate.

Outside, a light snow was falling; inside, beneath her husband's picture, a clock was ticking. These two things composed all of movement and sound that was about her.

"That is it," she mused; "they have simply beaten them into my brain; these miserable innuendos that they are constantly flinging out about you, until at last they have taken root in my very soul! Everybody agrees that a fashionable physician, whose time is devoted to fashionable women, cannot be a blameless man; that the very circumstances of his life will not permit it. Everybody says that I am a fool for having so long believed such a thing possible. Well," she added, wearily, "perhaps I am!"

A piece of wood fell out of the grate. She replaced it with the tongs, and when the first flutter of sparks had expired, continued her morbid thinking.

Was it possible, after all, that, in the very nature of things, a doctor could not be an honorable man? Possibly, since the whole world seemed to think so, and had taken pains to tell her it and rob her of her happiness. Her happiness! Ah, she had been happy, confessedly, proudly, almost

insolently so! How laughingly, at first, she had disposed of her friends' hints! She seemed to hear that merry laughter in this moment of silence, ringing through the house like so many bells. It startled her, and she spoke aloud again.

"How desperately I have parried with them since—each argument in my own defense and his a bitter humiliation to me!"

She dropped to silence again, as she vaguely wondered why they were so bent on hurting her. For a moment her lips trembled, and tears of self-pity filled her eyes. She dashed them away, and began to reason.

The women, yes, they might be envious; but the men? That was more serious. The men could have no motive, and they were more competent to know what a man's life really was. After all, how could she know? Perhaps her faith was absurd. At any rate, they were killing it; it was dying—hard, it was true, but dying; and there were moments when she felt that its death meant hers also.

How many times of late had Allan Heathcourt asked her if she were not jealous of her husband's lovely patients? Each time she had felt that the necessity of reply had made her ridiculous. If only she could cast these things from her for a day, a single hour! But she could not. Always she was wondering if other women, too, felt the spell of him. His appearance, his magnetism, his strong, masterful manner, his beautiful voice, all these things that caused her to adore him—might they not also cause others to adore him? It did not seem impossible. She had loved Lyon the very first moment that she beheld him—why not they? For a moment, she wished that he were hideous, a cripple, a failure, anything that would make him wholly hers.

She recalled the last ball that she and Allan Heathcourt attended. They were standing together, looking on at the dancers, when he had suddenly called her attention to Dr. Carroll,

on the other side of the room. She had looked, and there, handsome and engaging, with a somewhat familiar manner, she had seen the doctor head and shoulders above a group of apparently adoring women, who hung on his lightest word.

"It is the same with all the fashionable doctors," Heathcourt had said, carelessly; "adored by the women."

She remembered that she had turned very pale, and had been dizzy for a moment, but recovering herself, had answered him, haughtily: "My husband is different, Mr. Heathcourt; have you ever seen him?"

"No," he had replied, indifferently; "but I fancied they might all be alike; the same environment is apt to create similar conditions."

Then she had forgotten herself, and exclaimed, angrily: "Not necessarily; to my husband these women are nothing but flesh and blood and bones and disease! He has told me so!" And even as she experienced a keen embarrassment at the loss of her self-control, Mr. Heathcourt had replied, carelessly as before: "Your husband is a clever man, Mrs. Wellington—he has that reputation."

Such subtle efforts had not been wholly without effect, and suddenly, as she sat before the fire this dismal morning, all those women of the ball-room, who were only flesh and blood and bones and disease, rose before her and became very beautiful.

She thought of them, not in ball-room attire of silks and satins, gliding about through brilliantly lighted rooms, but in lace-trimmed cambric and silken negligée, pale and languid, within boudoirs where were flowers and lowered shades of delicate tint that cast subdued lights and shadows. And she saw her husband among them all, going from one to another, speaking to them in his wonderful voice, touching them with his magnetic hands, encouraging them, soothing their pains, hearing their secrets, listening patiently, with attention, with such patience and attention as he never had time to bestow on her.

A sudden wave of new jealousy spread through her, which caused her face and neck and breast to burn like fire. With the jealousy came shame and resentment—shame that she, his wife, was, in the eyes of others, the neglected, pitied one, the laughing-stock; resentment that Lyon, even though unwittingly, had allowed her to become so!

With trembling hands she picked up the note that lay in her lap, and read it through again.

Then she sprang to her feet. Yes, she would go! Did not Lyon go daily to sick women, at a mere call? And here was a sick man imploring her to go to him! Why not? If it was right for Lyon to go and cheer the suffering who needed him, why was it not right for her to go and cheer the suffering who needed her? Besides, by doing so, by placing herself in an exactly similar position, she could better judge of the effect that such things produced on him—whether there really was so much dangerous temptation in the situations of his daily life. She would walk into the dimly lighted, hushed sick-room, look into the patient's eyes, take his hand, listen, cheer and console. Then she might understand.

Miriam's pulse was bounding as she touched the bell-button. To the servant who appeared she said, "Call a messenger and a cab." As the maid retired she went to her desk and hurriedly wrote a note; ringing again for the servant, she ordered that it be given to the messenger. Then, very rapidly, she dressed for going out.

When at last she stepped into the cab and drove off, two burning spots were in her cheeks, and her eyes were blazing with excitement.

II

ALLAN HEATHCOURT, to whose apartments Miriam was driving, was a sandy-haired man of about forty years, who was growing a little bald about the temples, but whose well-preserved, athletic appearance vanquished any other

suggestion of the ravages of time. He stood six feet, wore a mustache that showed golden tints denied his locks, and was really what the world calls a handsome man.

He had money and belonged to several clubs, among them the Athletic, of which he was the idol. He was not only generally popular, but, too, highly respected. He had the reputation of being a splendid fellow in every way; above all else, he was regarded as a man of honor. This was due to a certain punctiliousness about money matters large and small, generosity to hard-up friends, and a delightful way of detailing experiences in which his conduct always savored of the heroic. He was an engaging conversationalist on any subject, and had a well-modulated, musical voice and a most polished manner, the fascination of which was experienced by all with whom he came in contact.

He was, in fact, a charming man of the world, with intelligence of a subtle order and a sufficiently kindly heart—when it did not interfere with his admiration of women. And women invariably admired him. Indeed, he found his conquests almost too simple to be interesting.

The first time he met Miriam Wellington he openly declared his admiration. To his surprise she was indifferent. Later, he discovered that she was head over heels in love with her husband. This created a real interest, and he realized more than ever the importance of expending his honor solely on masculinity. In the subtle manner of which he was a master, he soon succeeded in picturing her to herself as the much-neglected wife of a husband whose time was devoted to other women.

It was at the very height of his honorable endeavor to soothe the pain he himself had intentionally inflicted that he was thrown from his horse while riding after her in the Park. He had since been confined to his apartment with a lamed ankle. Six weeks had already elapsed, during which Miriam had received several notes from

him. Up to the present day, however, they had been ignored.

She was even now, as has been shown, driving toward him with quite a different motive than the one that caused, in spite of the pain he was suffering, a placid smile to linger in Mr. Heathcourt's eyes and beneath the golden mustache. On the receipt of her note he had got himself into a becoming house-coat and given minute directions to his man as to the requirements for luncheon, the brand of wine to be iced, the drawing of the curtains, the lighting of a lamp or two, and other minor details. In his excitement he had entirely forgotten his injunction to the hall-boy a few moments before—not to admit his present physician, "who wasn't doing one bit of good," but to search for another, he didn't in the least care who, and bring him instead. He impressed urgent haste in the matter by throwing the messenger a half-dollar. Hall-boys work faithfully for half-dollars, and the present one was not an exception. He executed his commission, and returned in time to open the door for Miriam, take her up in the elevator and escort her to Mr. Heathcourt's door.

There Miriam was met by the valet, who led her beyond a heavy Turkish portière into the presence of his master.

Mr. Heathcourt could not possibly have been seen to better advantage. Being a collector of pictures, beautiful ones lined the rich walls, and there were many rare vases and statuettes. On a couch reclined the man himself, his face illuminated with delight. He smiled radiantly and extended both his hands.

"How generous of you, my dear Mrs. Wellington!" he exclaimed, joyously. Then he added, with pained regret, "It is too bad to receive you thus—a real torture not to rise to greet you!"

Miriam's red spots had faded, but her eyes were still unusually brilliant.

"You have suffered a great deal?" she asked, timidly, as she approached him and nervously extended her hand.

The valet standing at her back

placed a chair for her, and having heard a quiet "That is all," from his master, retired.

As the door closed Heathcourt looked even more rapturously into Miriam's eyes.

"I have suffered, yes, and in many ways; but the worst suffering I have endured was being cut off from a sight of you."

Miriam rose suddenly. "I came, Mr. Heathcourt, in response to your repeated requests, with the hope that I might be able to cheer you a little—I know how terrible confinement to the house is to a strong man—but if you continue to pay me compliments, to extend your ball-room frivolities to the sick-room, I shall have to leave at once."

She spoke quite firmly, but Heathcourt replied playfully: "You do not believe for an instant that I think you could be so cruel?"

"Oh, I really could!" and Miriam laughed, a little nervously.

"Never." Heathcourt's eyes, which were very blue, spoke volumes.

"I have had horrible misgivings about coming at all!" she ventured.

"On such a charitable mission? I could not have supposed it of you! You really are very hard-hearted. It took ten written prayers to fetch you to the bedside of a poor wretch, who nearly broke his neck instead of his ankle on account of your charms, and you would even refuse him the comfort of a few poor little innocent words with you!"

"You should not put it that way," said Miriam; "it is forcing an obligation on me!"

"But since it is the truth? Frankly, now, since you are here, don't you feel a little reproached? Haven't your misgivings vanished? Do you find it so terrible?"

For an instant Miriam looked about her, sending quick, startled glances in every direction. Suddenly she turned pale.

"It is worse, far worse!" she exclaimed.

"Thank you." Heathcourt seemed

hurt, but he looked very tenderly into her eyes.

"Oh, I was not referring to you!"

"No? What, then?" He took one of her hands.

"I don't know," she replied, excitedly, recovering her hand. "I was thinking of something else, something entirely different."

She sprang to her feet.

"Mr. Heathcourt, I must go. My being here makes me so nervous that my presence will only disturb you. I am very sorry about your accident, that you are ill, and I hope you will soon be well and out again; but please do not attempt to detain me—I really must go!"

"Nonsense!" said Heathcourt, somewhat irritably. "There is no earthly objection to your being here; any number of my friends have called. We are going to have a nice little luncheon that I have ordered, and then a serious discussion over all your original ideas about propriety. You are not a bit advanced. Don't you think," he added, abruptly, "since you are in it you should become something of a woman of the world?"

"I've never thought of it one way or the other," Miriam replied, curtly.

"Exactly. I see I must teach you a few things," he remarked, returning to his playful mood. "First, let me assure you that you are merely under the excitement of doing something unusual. A charitable visit to a hospital would have had, I have no doubt, a similar effect on you. You have yet to learn to take things quietly—the secret of enjoying life is a succession of new experiences. Why, I warrant you've been doing the same things again and again every day for the past ten years. There comes an end to everything! Haven't you any liking for me at all, Mrs. Wellington?" ardently.

"It isn't that," she answered, flushing hotly.

"It is that—that's the whole of it!" said Heathcourt, emphatically.

"Here's the new doctor to see you,

sir!" exclaimed the hall-boy, triumphantly throwing open the door.

The physician entered immediately, gave one quick glance at Miriam, then quietly approached the bed.

"You've met with an accident, Mr. Heathcourt, I believe?"

"Yes, doctor, and, I fear, a pretty serious one—that, or I've had beastly treatment. I don't seem to be improving. Ah, this is my sister, doctor," he added, touching a bell on the table beside him. The physician bowed. "Take Mrs. Warren into the dining-room, James, and serve some wine. She is a little fatigued from her journey."

The man bowed, held aside another Turkish portière, and without a word Miriam followed him from the room.

In the dining-room the valet found it necessary to administer the wine quickly, for Mrs. Warren looked as if she were about to faint. She seemed dazed, and stretched out her hands to catch at him, so that he had to support her to a chair.

"It is my ankle, doctor," Heathcourt was saying. "I fell from my horse and dislocated the joint. It has been paining me a great deal lately—seems, in fact, to be getting worse instead of better. I can't bear the least bit of my weight on it."

"You shouldn't attempt to do so. When did the accident occur?"

"On my word, it must be six weeks that I've been shut up here!" Heathcourt burst forth. "You can imagine that, to an active man, it has been pretty trying."

"I can," said the physician. Then he added, looking about him: "Do you always keep things shut up like this, perfumes afloat and lamps burning? If so, I wonder your general health has not begun to fail you a bit."

"Oh, I am a pretty strong man, doctor," Heathcourt replied, with his usual satisfaction in the fact.

"Yes? Would you mind my letting in a little daylight while I take a look at your ankle?"

"Certainly not. Let me ring."

"No," said the physician, deterring him; "I can manage things." He drew aside the heavy curtains, extinguished a lamp and returned to the couch. "Now, which leg is it?"

"This one," said Heathcourt, throwing aside the silk coverlet and exposing the bandaged ankle.

"The left, is it? Well, now let's see what the real trouble is."

The physician carefully unbound the wounded member, examined it closely, touching it in various spots, and requesting to be told where it was most painful. Finally he looked up, cheerfully.

"There is nothing very serious that I can discover. You have attempted to use your foot too soon, and so have set up a little inflammation. I am going to advise that you put the ankle in a plaster cast for a couple of weeks; and do not on any account attempt to stand on it. The whole complication is due to your having used it too soon. It will be impossible for me to put the cast on this afternoon, as I have some very sick people waiting for me. I shall reduce your pain, however, by an application, and you will really be in better shape to-morrow morning for the operation."

"All of which means more confinement," said Heathcourt, testily.

"Any accident involving the joint is tedious and a tax on the patience," said the physician. "I shall step across to the drug-store now, and get what is immediately required."

"Let me send my man, doctor."

"No, thank you. The prescription is a little unusual, or, rather, something new to the druggist, and I prefer to go myself."

"You are very kind, doctor. You don't think I'm going to be shut up here too long, do you?"

"No; if you are careful not to throw yourself back." And the physician went out.

A moment later Miriam burst breathless into the room. Her face was pallid, and her gentle eyes were filled with unutterable horror.

"Mr. Heathcourt!" she gasped.

"Well," said Heathcourt, startled; "what's up? What's happened?"

"That was my husband!"

"The deuce you say!" He attempted to leap to his feet, but fell back in anguish. They remained for a moment, white as death, staring at each other.

"What am I to do?" Miriam asked, at last.

"Go at once, and leave it to me."

"But what will you do? What can you do?"

"Anything that occurs to me—anything that will protect you! Only, go before he returns!"

"Returns?"

"Yes," said Heathcourt, speaking rapidly; "he has gone for the medicine, and intends to return immediately! What he means to do I don't know! At any rate, you must not be here, and before he gets a chance to do anything I will exonerate you!"

"In spite of what his own eyes have seen?" she burst forth.

"In spite of everything! Go now."

Stunned and terror-stricken, she turned and did as he bade.

"Well!" said Heathcourt, as the door closed, "I have faced difficulties before and had as narrow escapes as most men; but this—! Talk about being surprised by the enemy! By Jove, old man, you're put to it! But the doctor! What the devil did he mean by taking it like that? I'm hanged if it doesn't look as if he were throwing me off my guard, to go out and get a pistol to blow my brains out—and I can't even stand on my feet. I always knew a woman would be my finish! But this one—I must exonerate her at any cost. I might have known when she stood there so speechless, not even nodding to the doctor when I introduced them, that something was up; but when one is dealing with a woman who is afraid of her own shadow, one might expect anything! I must lie like a trooper—but what to lie about the Lord only knows! And I introduced her as my

sister! Oh, what an ass—as though there were any need to introduce her at all! But how do I know what these doctors expect in a social way—what's professional and what isn't? One thing I do know is that I was a blooming idiot to think she could care anything about me when she's got *him*! What a fool she must think me, trying to make light of him! It is like attempting to knock the sun out of the heavens with a pebble. By Jove! here he comes, and I haven't thought of the first thing to say, and haven't one single thing to work on but the woman's general character. Thank heaven, that's beyond reproach. I must stick to that—and perjure myself."

"You're looking pale, Mr. Heathcourt," said the physician, entering. "Before beginning this bandaging I would advise a little brandy. Are you in pain?"

"Pain! Good Lord! Dr. Wellington, I'm in hell! Haven't you run on your wife here in my rooms?"

"I see only my professional duties in a sick-room, Mr. Heathcourt. Will you ring for the brandy?"

"But your own wife!"

"Doesn't alter the case in the least."

"And you mean to tell me that you're going to work on my leg?"

"Certainly. Your ankle needs immediate attention; the inflammation is on the increase."

"Good God!"

"Mr. Heathcourt, I must insist on your not exciting yourself. I have a little painful work to perform on you, and you will need your strength."

"Do you suppose, doctor, that I am thinking about my strength, or my ankle, or myself at all? If so, I want to inform you that, in spite of appearances, I am not quite the blackguard that you take me for! Through me an innocent woman has become involved. I am thinking of her! I don't care if I never take another step as long as I live, I'm going to clear your wife! Am I going to lie still like a cowardly dog and have you,

because of some professional code, or rule, or whatever you choose to call it, minister to me while you would like to stick a knife in my heart instead? I inveigled your wife to this place, doctor, by a lie. She came because of that lie, and she cares about as much for me as she does for my valet. She's in love with you! I've always known that, but I thought if I could induce her to come here that I might shake that idolatry by ridicule and prove my own attractions under favorable conditions. You see, I had never seen *you*!"

The physician who was rolling a bandage over his knee, remained silent.

"I've been paying your wife attentions whenever I happened to meet her, for some time. I never had any scruples about winning a woman, even when she was the wife of my best friend; so there was certainly no reason for my paying you especial deference, was there?"

"Not that I can see," said the physician, putting the rolled bandage aside and beginning on another.

"Well, I didn't. But I never made the least impression on Mrs. Wellington! That doesn't excuse me, but it should exonerate her! I repeat that I enticed her here by a lie! I wrote her that there was no hope for my life, and by coming she could save another woman from ruin—that the circumstance could be revealed, with safety, to her alone!"

Heathcourt paused to collect himself. He had certainly lied nobly, had fulfilled to the letter his idea of propriety, had lived up to his reputation as a man of honor. He was excited. Rising to a sitting position, he concluded, in a ringing voice: "Dr. Wellington, there is not the first thing for which you have to reproach your wife!"

The physician rose at this moment, and touched the bell. The valet entered.

"Bring Mr. Heathcourt some brandy, and then come here and give me a little assistance in dressing his ankle."

James poured the brandy from a decanter on a table near by, and Heathcourt drank it eagerly. Feeling himself exhausted and dominated, he lay back on the pillows, while the physician proceeded to dress his ankle.

All during the operation Heathcourt lay still, with his eyes fastened on the man quietly ministering to him, now gazing at the strong, impassive face; again fascinated by the flexibility of the fingers and the skilful use of them. It seemed to him that, for the first time in his life, he really beheld a man, that ideal man, long forgotten, whom his youth had conceived. And he had accused this strong, unimpressionable being of flirting with sickly, silly women!

He could have laughed aloud at his folly. He remained perfectly silent, under the spell of a power and a delicacy of touch that was like velvet to the sore nerves beneath it—a power that once or twice caused him involuntarily to close his eyes. He vaguely realized what a physician may be. But, after all, this was a man as well—and an impenetrable one. What were his intentions concerning his wife, when the professional consideration was out of the question? Heathcourt determined that he must find out. But he did not. When the physician finished the operation of dressing the ankle, he motioned silence to James and quietly left the house—for his patient was asleep.

III

"HOME!" said the physician, as he entered his cab, "and drive fast."

Reaching his house, he opened the door with his night-key and was about to ascend the steps, when he was intercepted by a servant.

"There have been several telephone calls, sir, and two patients, who insisted on waiting for you, are in the office!"

"Has Mrs. Wellington returned?"

"She is in her room, sir."

"Say that I will be in the office in half an hour."

"Yes, sir."

The physician mounted the steps, two at a time, and entered his wife's room.

Miriam, who was lying on a couch, face downward, sprang to her feet and faced him.

"Lyon!"

"Well?"

"You here!" she gasped.

"Certainly," the physician replied, calmly, as he advanced toward her. "Were you not expecting me?"

"Yes—no—that is, not so soon—I had thought—Lyon!"

"Yes?"

"What must you think of me?"

"I have not allowed myself to think anything, Miriam."

"But you *do* think!" she half shrieked. "You're standing there diagnosing me, just as you do a case that you have been called in to see!"

He interrupted her. "You're entirely mistaken, Miriam."

"Oh, yes, I'm mistaken! Didn't you go there and find me at Mr. Heathcourt's?"

"Yes."

"Well, doesn't that mean that it's all over, that the patient is dying?" she questioned, excitedly.

"I'm not in the habit of giving up so easily, at any rate not until I have inquired into the case and the cause of the conditions I find."

"No; that's just it—you're not!" she sneered. "You like to watch and see the last gasp! It's terrible! What did that man, Mr. Heathcourt, say to you?"

"Nothing very much."

"Whatever it is, you must tell me! Are you afraid—afraid of helping me out? Do you think I'm asking you to help myself, so as to know what is best for me to say, what will tally? Do you think I've fallen so low as that?"

"No; I never gave you credit for that kind of intelligence."

"Then why don't you tell me?"

Are you made of stone? Am I not even worth your anger?"

"I wish you to compose yourself first."

"Wish me to compose myself!" Miriam stared at him, then burst into a peal of violent, hysterical laughter. "You wish me to compose myself!" she repeated.

"Yes, I do!" said the physician, firmly. "Whatever you wish to say to me you can say quietly." He laid his hand on her, but she sprang from him.

"Then why don't you tell me what he said to you?"

"Because what he said was all a lie and of no importance. I wish to hear what you have to say. That's what I came home for, leaving cases that urgently required my presence. I could wait, but I felt that you couldn't. You have something to say to me that you wish to say at once; in other words, you need me more than my patients do; and I am here."

"Lyon!"

"Well, dear?"

For a moment she looked at him wildly, dazed by the mystery of man's reason, that controlled masculine endowment to woman unknown and uncomprehended; the Godlike something that stands at the helm of a man's life guiding and directing it under conditions that would instantly dash a woman to pieces.

"Whatever he told you," she finally burst forth, incoherently, "was a lie, an invention to save me, for he himself does not know why I went—he never will know, but you will; and, Lyon, you must believe me!"

"I will believe you, Miriam."

He led her to the couch, and seated himself in front of her. "Now, tell me what made you do such a silly thing," he said to her, gently.

"Oh, Lyon, tell me first what you think of me?"

"It isn't what I think, Miriam, but what you've allowed him to think! If you went for love of the man, I might have that to forgive—but I know you didn't!"

"Lyon, I don't care what he thinks—I went in spite of what he might think, to satisfy myself about you!"

"Me?"

"Yes, you! Ah, my God, how I have suffered!"

"Miriam, what are you talking about?"

"You! you! *you!* It's always you! I went there because they've driven me insane about you, and I wanted to see for myself. I wanted to go and stand by the bedside of a sick man, to find out just how it felt; to learn the truth—if it was so that you couldn't resist, if——"

He grasped her hands, while a flush mounted to his face and a vein stood out in his forehead. "Stop! What's this you're saying? You are ill!"

"No, I'm not ill!" she exclaimed, freeing her hands and looking at him, anguished, "no more ill than I have been every day, every hour of my life, for the past—oh, I don't know how long it has been since they beat it into me!"

"Great heaven! beat what into you?"

"That you couldn't resist them!"

"Resist whom?"

"The women you go to see, your patients, the sick ones who half the time are not sick, but who just send for you!"

She clasped her hands in terror, fixed her eyes on his, and for a moment they sat like statues, staring at each other.

Finally the physician spoke. "And who has told you this, filled you up with this damnable folly?"

"Who? Everybody! The men as well as the women! My friends, my acquaintances, your patients!"

"And you—my wife—why haven't you laughed in their faces?"

"How could I?"

"How could you! If you had had faith in me, you could!"

"Lyon!"

"So this is what has been going on!" he continued, ignoring her cry. "Day after day I've been holding in my heart a woman who doubted my

honor, my very manhood! For shame, Miriam!"

"Lyon——"

"No; don't speak to me! If you are not blind to all sense of justice, can't you see the absurdity of it? Have you ever discovered in me, in my daily life, tendencies toward folly and deceit and lying?"

"No, Lyon!"

"Then is it natural to conclude that I should begin on you, whose love and respect are my dearest possessions? And who are these people, my accusers? A lot of rattle-brained women piqued at my indifference, and some vain coxcombs piqued at yours! Why, you're not even clever! Can't you really see through these shallow people of the world, who flit about like mosquitos, with a sting for whatever lies content and placid before them? Don't you know that they can't bear the unusual ones, those who are beyond them in serenity? It was the very fact that they knew how I held you above them, were conscious of you alone as worthy my serious consideration, beyond their ailments, that influenced them to disturb you in your happiness—for you were happy!"

The physician rose, impatiently. "Why haven't you told me all this before? Don't you know that when a poison gets into the system the thing to do is to get it out? Are love and its meaning no more sacred to you than that? How I would have laughed if anyone had told me that you had secret sorrows unknown to me, that I had failed to make you happy! that anything stood between you and me, Miriam."

She had risen when he did, and he had seen her growing paler as

he spoke. When he had uttered the last word, her lids flickered, she stretched forth her arms, and he caught her as she fainted.

But she lost herself only for a minute. As he attempted to put her on the couch, she put him from her, and stood up.

"No, no," she said, a little bewildered, but quite conscious, "it was nothing, only for the moment I felt as the dead must who, when they have risen, are shown their records; who for the first time see themselves as they were. I not only saw myself, Lyon, but I saw you, too. And this is how I feel, dear—let me get down on my knees and kiss your hands."

Before he could prevent her, she had dropped down before him, and for a moment he let her remain there, expending her shame and grief in hot kisses and bitter tears.

When, finally, he lifted her, she remained apart from him—the tears wet on her cheeks, but the look of an angel in her face.

"Go, dear," she said, "go back to them, nurse and heal and cure and comfort them! Give of yourself to them—your brain, your intellect, your genius, your soothing voice, your masterful presence—" her own voice trembled—"your touch, Lyon, even that——"

He reached out, took her in his arms, and held her in a close embrace.

"I am yours," he whispered; "you know that—yours first! Do you send me—give me to them?"

"Fully, fully; go quickly—they are waiting for you."

"And you?"

"My part is to await your return, to wait patiently and in faith! That is what I give."



CORDIAL INVITATION

"Do you know what I think?" said Goslin to Gazzam.

"No," replied Gazzam; "but I have five minutes to spare. Tell me all."

THE MORNING AFTER

By James Clarence Harvey

THE waltz, the wine, the whispered words that thrill,
The shadowed nooks in a conservatory,
A dozen dances, quite ignored, until
His lips could frame anew the old, old story.
The orchids droop, the violets breathe their last,
The atmosphere about them getting torrid—
When love is sweet, what makes flowers fade so fast?
The dance is done; 'tis nearly morn—"How horrid!"

When from the arms of sleep dear dreams arise,
Enfolded soft in daintiest, filmiest laces—
Fond angels, drifted out of Paradise,
Whence come those little frowns upon their faces?
Justine, the maid, might question, with a sigh,
"Where is the usual smile and rippling laughter?"
An angel's voice might, brusquely, make reply,
"Ah, woe is me! it is the Morning After."

The sunbeams tip-toe in to kiss her hair;
On cheek and chin the sunshine loves to linger;
The whispering South-wind murmurs, "She is fair!"—
She does not care the tip of one small finger,
For she has found a snowy little hair,
And stilled, alas! is all her song and laughter;
That silver record of a happy care
Upsets the whole wide world—The Morning After.

What knows the peach that ripens in the sun,
The kisses of the leaves about her scorning,
Of how the restless race of life is run?
What does she know about a *real* Next Morning?
One flake of snow does not a Winter make;
A woman's life is full of moods and tenses;
When dreams are shattered, hearts should never break,
But cherish them as sweet experiences.

The Morning After! Then the mirror shows,
By little starts and swiftly fleeting flushes,
That memory is at work. The mirror knows
They are but echoes, dear, of last night's blushes.
But then the angel empties out her heart,
Of all its pleading, coaxing, sighing tenants;
Hangs up a sign: "No rooms to let, within,"
And all the men—save one—do nine days' penance.

SONG

A LITTLE fleet of cloud-boats
 Goes sailing down the sky,
 In some unfathomed haven
 Anchored at peace to lie.

My love of you goes drifting
 Adown the days. Ah, me,
 Would that its peaceful harbor
 Within your heart might be!

CHARLOTTE BECKER.



DEMONSTRATED

“GEORGE,” said the pretty girl, “what is reciprocity?”
 “Why, it’s this,” he answered; “I get something I want in exchange for something you want.”

And the smack that followed showed that she clearly understood politics.



A MODERN VERSION

OLD wine, we know, is good to drink,
 Old wood is best to burn;
 Between the covers of old books
 New things we often learn;
 Old friends are truest, too, by far,
 As everybody knows.
 But where’s the man with proper pride
 Who likes to wear old clothes?

Old paintings, warm with glowing tints,
 Are always worth the most;
 Old china, too, of rarest blue,
 To hold our tea and toast;
 But on the first of every month—
 Oh, worst of earthly ills!—
 Kind heaven forevermore defend
 Us all against old bills!

MINNA IRVING.

THE MARRIAGE MERCHANT

By Maud Stepney Rawson

“WHAT is that nasty green stuff you are giving me, Quip?” asked her grace of Dittisham, suspiciously, amid the roar of voices in Mrs. Ben Imray’s supper-rooms.

“Innocent vegetation, duchess,” said Jack Quipstaffe, man of Mayfair.

“It isn’t down on the card, Quip,” said her grace, pouncing merrily on a little cluster of *alouettes à la Périgord* in the dish before her.

“Yes; it is ‘larks in a mist’—free translation of *Bonne Bouche*’s French. This salad is the mist.” And he helped her gallantly. His companion gave a gasp and a little gurgle.

“Don’t look at me, Quip; hide your nice Japanesy blue eyes for a moment. There! that’s all right. But for a whole ten seconds I felt like the man in the magic-lantern, who never stops swallowing rats. I’m sure I’ve been eating a continuous laurel-wreath, or some part of the table decoration. It must be a new idea.”

“Possibly.” Quip arranged his monocle and lifted up to it a fragment of the salad in his white kid fingers, as he stood by the duchess’s chair.

“It is cress,” he announced, solemnly; “it is the sort of thing that you plant when you’re in a sailor suit. You plant it in patterns, and it generally comes up wrong. It grows in pleasant places. It is always very fresh and tender and young—and full of associations. It makes me long to lay my head on a bank,” he concluded, with a sigh of excessive weariness.

“Oh, yes,” returned his portly

friend, with one of her big laughs; “I know the kind of bank you’d like to rest on, Quip. Don’t pretend you’re jaded already, when it’s only the beginning of June and everyone is still in a good temper. Country joys, indeed! I don’t pretend I’m under fifty, my dear boy, and you don’t hear me grumbling of tiredness. London in Summer is delightful, and I am going to turn up every season till I die. I should like to die in my box at Covent Garden. No creeping away into a hole for me! As it is, you may be sure my beloved step-son and heir won’t give me much chance to rest.”

“When Dittisham is married,” said Quip, “you will be more independent, duchess.”

“That depends,” responded her grace, grimly. “Directly I find a woman who won’t mind the trouble of managing him, I shall begin life over again, like a school-girl. I’m a widow without any of the privileges of widowhood, Quip. If he were my very own son I should have a freer hand. As it is, I have to tolerate all sorts of things, with the knowledge that I can’t do what I like with my own money when I die. I always hope for the best. But if Dit proves too much for any woman, then my responsibilities will last forever.”

“Cheer up, duchess!” said Quip.

“I’m serious,” she answered. “Dear Quip, get me some iced champagne at once. The bare notion of not getting Dittisham undertaken by someone else reduces me to hysteria.”

Just then the crowd, drifting to and from the pretty, fruit-laden tables,

parted, and through a gap the duchess caught in vignette a corner table, the occupants of which faced her—the man tall, pale and narrow-chested, with dark smooth thin hair, a small mustache, faint eyebrows and long eyes tilted at the corners; the girl, shy yet frank, with deep, serious eyes, and beautifully but simply dressed in white and silver, a wreath of tiny white cluster roses in her soft brown hair.

Then the duchess forgot the larks in a mist, and deliberately stared through her formidable glasses.

"Humph!" she ejaculated, after a whole minute's inspection; "very pretty, very good style and good physique; but no character. Too good for Dittisham; too gentle; too little pepper. Blushes under a dragon's gaze instead of boldly preening herself like a hardened young person. Who is she, Quip?"

"Miss Patience Chenies," said Quip, glibly; "eldest daughter of the Rev. Sir Edward Chenies, Bart., vicar of St. Una's, Crowfoot-on-the-Marshes, near Oxford, and distinguished authority on undecipherable Lydian inscriptions. No heir; baronetcy goes to distant cousin."

"It's a judgment. That always happens when a man with a title will go into Orders," remarked the lady, flippantly.

"Duchess," said Quip, reprovingly, "yesterday you attended two religious bazaars, and you spoke feelingly on three platforms."

"Yes, dear Quip. I am a little hysterical to-night. Who is chaperoning that girl?"

"Her father's first cousin, your old friend, Lady Mary Mant."

"Oho! Mary will ruin the girl," was the smiling answer; "and the girl won't have the strength of mind to revenge herself. Quip, why does Dittisham always look as if he had just recovered from German measles?"

"It was very windy at Sandown to-day," conceded the discreet Jack Quipstaffe, "and the sun was frightful. If only his Majesty would set

the fashion of wearing a cabbage leaf under his hat! As for the dust——"

"Gold-dust, I suppose. Looks as if it had got into Dit's eyes," said the lady, ironically. "If little Miss Muffet, or whoever she is over there, would take him down to Crowfoot-on-the-Marshes and help him to live on twopence, and grow rosy and bigger in the chest, I should love her forever. But the experiment might be dangerous. Her people might get their talons into poor Dit, and the two would be married at nine o'clock one morning in their traveling tweeds, and walk away through the village over squashed marigolds and china asters. I can see it all."

The block at the door near them suddenly dissolved, and a graceful woman in mauve, with prematurely gray hair, cold, fine features and a perfect figure, rustled past them. The jolly duchess flourished a large white fan at her.

"Hullo, Mary! Aren't you goin' to ask after my gout? Look at the little yellow lumps just above both my eyes, either side of my beautiful nose! Don't see them? My dear Mary, they're landmarks. Come, come, surely you need not try to flatter an old friend. I'm proud of them. Lord Dulke and I had a great time at Harrogate comparing notes; he is lamer than I, but I've the bigger lumps on my lids."

"Nonsense, Elizabeth," said Lady Mary Mant; "I envy you your good health. You never show wrinkles, dear."

"We are not all so beautiful as your little cousin, Mary." The white fan indicated the table where little Patience reverently listened to the young duke's views on betting—which, he told her, was not wicked, as she had been taught to believe, but a fine art, in which courage and philosophy were the prime qualities. Just then she happened to look up, and her red lips broke into a merry smile.

"Who is that extraordinary old lady with a crown of sham red and white

stones?" she asked her companion, eagerly.

He blinked. Patience had gone nearer the mark than she knew. The real tiara had reposed at the Bank of England ever since he had suggested to its present owner the use of the stones as a security. But the imitation was good, and he answered Patience with a clear conscience.

"Rippin' stones!" he said; "been in the family ever since Philippa of Hainault came over; the largest rubies on record outside the regalia."

"Oh," said Patience, blushing with embarrassment, "how stupid of me! You see they are such a wonderful size, and I have never seen a regular tiara before. Aunt Mary only wears a diamond dagger in her hair, because she says you see the most dreadful people with fences on their heads now. But who is that lady?"

"My step-mother," said Dittisham, in a matter-of-fact tone, as he filled up his glass.

"Oh!" gasped poor Patience, dropping her fan, her sandwich and her Brussels kerchief all together.

"Don't worry," said the duke. "Have some cup. She's a good sort, you know, but eccentric. She's one of those people who can afford to wear anything and do anything. She is a great trial to me—" he looked mournfully at the topaz froth in his glass. "We've just made it up, you know. I put up with a good deal for the sake of appearances." And he sighed again, and looked into Patty Chenies's soft, clear eyes.

"What a charming bundle of muslin!" murmured the duchess, still staring at the corner table through her glasses. "But it won't do. Quip, go and separate them in your nice, tactful way."

"Quip," said Lady Mary, swooping down on him at the same moment, "do find me a seat. My cavalier is a noodle. Just look at him wandering round! And I am dying with hunger! I simply won't go back to the ball-room till I have eaten."

So Lady Mary pinned Quip into a

corner, and the duchess, in a huff, knowing that she could never get upstairs alone, gnashed her teeth, snarled at the waiters, and finally climbed, grumbling, into her carriage before Quip could make his way back.

Lady Mary felt herself a success. The "bundle of muslin" went down splendidly, and she had a bachelor duke in tow. That, for a début, was not despicable. She reëntered the ball-room with Jack Quipstaffe, and introduced him to her niece. And little Patience Chenies, glancing up shyly, beheld a tall, well-made man of thirty, with the air of a prince and china-blue eyes that looked straight through her and beyond.

II

A WEEK later paragraphs in *The Linkman* spoke of the beauty and attractions of Miss Patience Chenies, the youngest débutante of the season. A stress was laid on the adjectives, to the delight of Lady Mary and the fury of other match-makers.

"You see, she hasn't a manner yet, so we must make something of her youth," her ladyship said to Quip, who, twinkling, repeated it to his friend and colleague, the editor of *The Linkman*. The women's papers took the cue, and Patty's very simple gowns were described everywhere.

When Jack Quipstaffe's trusty man grew confidential and reckless below stairs, he was wont to inform his fellows that "we"—he had caught the editorial pronoun from overlooking his master's correspondence—"we 'old society in the 'ollow of our 'and." And Quip undoubtedly did.

The profession of augur is not to be lightly undertaken. But a fertile imagination and just that spice of bounce which surely carried Delphi through many an awkward moment were part also of the stock-in-trade of Mr. Quipstaffe in his rôle of matrimonial gossip and reporter to Mayfair in general and to *The Linkman* in particular.

The marriages of the future belonged to those mysteries of which he only seemed to have the key; in the marriages of the present he played a smiling and principal part as fashionable recorder *par excellence*; and over the marriages of the past he exercised a benign scrutiny, amassing dainty bits of gossip for purposes of future prognostication as busily as any honey-bee. He had it in his power to make or mar the marriage plots of every chap-eron in London. He was the arch-priest of Hymen. He was regarded as a genius, having created a demand that only he could supply without loss of prestige. He grew so busy that he almost ruled the ladies' papers, and he was forced to employ a small army of typewriters in his rooms, the very smartest in St. James's. His mantelpiece was one great stack of invitations and photographs, and his coffers grew full. And when the duchess—the only duchess worth knowing, in his opinion—took him up, Quip's future was assured. He was positively overworked, though he still found time to spend long hours in the den of *The Linkman's* editor, when the two, irreproachably dressed and smoking the most exquisite cigars, would call each other "my dear f'la" while the scandals of the week rolled trippingly from their tongues. Certainly Quip was overstrained; so many matrimonial canards were afloat that it was impossible to steer quite clear of errors. Twice he almost made bad enemies of good friends, but his luck carried him through.

By the time people were crowding into St. George's to see a maid of honor marry the man who made the best sausages in England, Quip was himself again and almost reckless. Royalty was present, and the gathering was representative. Pretty young Mrs. Raleigh, a friend of the bride, took Patience. As usual, the place of honor was Quip's. Once or twice and with admirable stealthiness, he used a turquoise-enameled pocket-pencil and ivory tablets hinged with silver. Patience pulled her dragon's sleeve.

"Why is Mr. Quipstaffe there?" she asked; "he is just behind the princess."

"Taking notes," whispered Mrs. Raleigh; "that's part of his interesting work. No one can describe a gown like Quip. He and Modus, the English Worth, you know, dear, had a terrible scene the other day about a *ruche* and a *bouillonnée*, and they got Madame Parnasse to arbitrate; and Modus proved to be in error. Quip is a darling. He wrote such nice things about my wedding last season. If one could only be married several times! Good Brussels lace is so perfect, and that wedding march so upsetting and lovely! I cried tremendously when it was all over. You must have Quip at your wedding, dear. And don't be married from a parsonage. My cousin was, and the place was so small her train was ruined and she couldn't wear it at court."

"Here they are!" she murmured, as the pair came down the aisle. "Poor lamb! She is really sacrificed at last to that cheesemonger;" and she hunted for the sort of lace handkerchief that accentuates tears.

"He seems as much of a gentleman as half the men here," said Patience, rather indignantly; "and at any rate, he looks good and——"

But the crowd swept her with it over the crimson carpet in the wake of princesses and into Mrs. Raleigh's victoria, before the sentence was finished.

While the great Quip, glad of a lift to the house of bridal festival and nothing loath to sharpen his wit against Mrs. Raleigh's, sat perched on the back seat in his best mood, Patience stared at him in cold pity. So this was the great Mr. Quipstaffe of whom her aunt made so much, the brilliant, intellectual creature who was an honored guest at great houses, the companion of the sons of cabinet ministers, the man for whose acquaintance people quarreled and struggled! And he spent his life within a two-mile radius of the Achilles statue, describing orange blossoms and fur-

belows, or pitchforking people together with a stroke of his pen. She listened to his raillery with scorn. The desire seized her to retort in his own tongue. Tears of anger lay close at hand for her sheer inability to find words crisp enough to express her feelings and extort attention from him. The underlying irony in his deferent appeals to her unbiased opinion as a young, untutored creature maddened her.

She knew no one at the crowded wedding, and stole gladly away into a tiny boudoir set apart for the Royal gifts. She assumed an air of preternatural absorption over the jewel-cases, when a jaunty voice spoke her name.

"Miss Chenies," cried Quip, very proud of having received an unexpected recognition from a great personage, "what makes you so solemn? What is in your mind?"

Patience waited, then she said, with what appeared to her deadly malice, but was in reality demure sweetness: "I was thinking that you looked just now as if you were made to ride through life on the back seat of a victoria, Mr. Quipstaffe."

"What have I done?" said Quip, with an agonized air. "I entreat you, be explicit, Miss Chenies. Please wait a minute. Let me take you down to tea, and then you can trample on me at your sweet leisure."

So the rogue disarmed poor Patience, and when they were solemnly settled in a corner, with strawberries and cream, she felt herself to be a fool.

"I have annoyed you," said Quip, earnestly. His china-blue eyes were irresistible, his mouth drooped slightly at the corners; there was a slight nervousness in his voice; he had not misjudged its effect.

"I—that is—you," stammered poor Patience, blushing and trembling. "Oh, Mr. Quipstaffe, it seems so rude of me, but it was such a shock to find that a man like you could make a profession out of writing about frocks and weddings and rubbish.

It seems so dreadful. My father says a man's sphere of work is the service of his country, whether it is making horseshoes or Acts of Parliament."

Here a large spoonful of pink cream splashed down on her pretty dress, and Quip relieved her of her plate with tender sympathy.

"Oh, please forgive me for saying this," faltered Patience once more, "for I know you are years older than I am—" Quip winced gloomily and shot a quick glance at the flushed face before she raised it and opened inspiring, idealistic eyes full on him—"but it is so unmanly—what you are doing. You look so strong and so determined. And the duke told me you got your 'blue' at Oxford for cricket, and Aunt Mary says all your ancestors were splendid fighting men. I believe you could do anything, if you chose. You have such square shoulders, so different from the poor duke's." The sudden and awkward comparison made her stumble on still more awkwardly. "The duke simply worships you. I asked him all about you, and he says it is a crying shame you aren't a landowner and a——"

"I couldn't make a horseshoe," said Quip, shaking his head sadly.

"I believe you could," cried Patience. "How I should like to see you, with the sparks flying all round! I actually tried it once at the forge near our house, but it was hard work."

"Miss Patience," said Quip, gravely, "what you say is very wonderful and splendid. I hope you will never think otherwise. I hope you will keep unsullied your pure standards of life through all the twisted paths of this howling wilderness people call society." And with this platitude he looked down on her half in pity, half in curiosity to see how she would take his patronage. He could not credit her with any real interest in him, but merely attributed to her the sententiousness of a parsonage education. To his surprise she drew herself up and said, sharply:

"Do you know it is the rudest thing

in the world for a man to patronize a woman, under any circumstances?"

"But then I am so much older, you know," murmured Quip, highly pleased at her spirit.

"I simply detest you when you talk down to people," went on Patience, with angry irrelevance. "It's just what very old people do, and that is why old people are so often avoided by their friends." She felt it was time to conclude the interview, and started to go. But a table of roses and the magnificent figure of Quip hemmed her in.

"Miss Chenies," responded her mentor, "Acts of Parliament do not pay for the making, and horseshoes are very little better as regards a living wage for a gentleman. Only millionaires can afford to construct either of these commodities for nothing. Tell me, is it more honest to pay your bills or to run into debt? The first? Very good. Now, you see, my father, who did nothing for his wealth, brought me up with men of money and position. When I came of age he married again, and just as I was going into the army he plumped me into business, with an allowance of fifty pounds a year and a salary of a hundred. I bore it as long as I could. I found it possible to hire an evening suit occasionally and belong to a third-rate club, with no prospect of any future whatsoever. It is unfortunate that an aptitude for cricket does not assist one to a living in this hard, unpoetical world. I fell back on the best opportunity that offered of helping myself to a life less pitifully sordid and unbeautiful. I think that you, of all people, with all your ideals, would agree that every opportunity that broadens life must be grasped. I grasped the only chance I saw of a certainty, and long experience has taught me to use the capital with which nature or life provides a man."

"I don't see where a man's strength comes in there," said Patience, obstinately.

"But I had a knowledge of the ins and outs of things in London. That

was all my capital. I have now a steady income of a size that a flourishing barrister would not despise, an independent life, and a circle of friends on whose hospitality and comradeship I can always depend. I have no enemies for long. You disdain to call my work a profession, but even your father, Miss Chenies, would agree that a gentleman serves England well by keeping off the rates and by paying his butcher and haberdasher—" wicked Quip, who tore up his tailor's bills regularly—"and though it is not work that you approve, it is more honest labor than the various forms of gambling in which nine-tenths of the men indulge west of the Griffin. I will not disguise from you—" Quip's mouth drooped again, and he threw a cleverly savage ring into his voice—"that it is distasteful to me. There are moments when I would give worlds to hurl society from me. But you see that I cannot help myself. You must never judge people hastily. And now that I have confessed so much, and proved how right your instinct is, I hope you will be kinder to me than to anyone else." He smiled a little, pathetically.

The girl's eyes filled; she did not dare raise them. "I am extremely sorry," she answered, gently, "and I quite see. I was very stupid and rash. What a horrid place London is! Good-bye; I must go. Cousin Mary wants me."

"We shall meet at Dit's place in Surrey, I hope, after next week?"

"Oh, I don't think so," said Patience, hurriedly, with rising color.

Then Quip discovered the tears in her eyes, and a sudden and unaccountable shock passed through him.

"But you must!" he persisted. "Dittisham bullied his mamma to collect a house-party—and all in your honor—because you want to see the famous roses in blossom at Freynesham Court."

"I d-don't know," stammered Patience, remembering with misery her

chaperon's solemn assertion that she must be prepared to receive a formal declaration from the owner of Freynesham.

"I think the duchess hates me," she said, solemnly. "Cousin Mary says so."

"No one could hate you," said Quip, energetically.

"But she does," persisted Patience. "Cousin Mary says she hates all the duke's friends. But she is very kind to me, all the same."

Then Lady Mary pounced on her charge, and Quip was left to stroll gently through Stanhope Gate and by the Row back to his rooms, wondering why he had taken the trouble to impart his criticism of life to little Patience.

But as the week went on he grew more contemptuous of society, and, he believed, much incensed at what he called the impertinence of Miss Chenies. A spirit of mischief, prompted, though he knew it not, by absolute pique, mastered him. The amorous and ejaculatory Dittisham found him for once a most ready confidant. And Quip assured himself that there were not many green and tender first-season maidens over whose matrimonial future he would have so concerned himself as he did in the case of Lady Mary Mant's young cousin.

III

THE visit to Freynesham proved more exhausting to certain of the house-party than two at least had anticipated. One of these was Jack Quipstaffe. He found the rôle of a double go-between—on the one hand between his friend and Patience, on the other between Dittisham and the duchess—very hard labor indeed. Lady Mary also grew worn and anxious.

"I don't like Emily's sugary manner to me," she confided to Quip, as she drew him aside into one of the side walks, the morning after a croquet tournament; "it always means she has something up her sleeve. We have

been here nearly three days; we leave to-morrow—and Dittisham never gets near Patty; something always crops up. I've kept her in her room this morning, poor child; she is getting so nervous. It really is very trying. Why didn't you help me more yesterday, Quip? Instead of letting the two have a quiet half-hour in the Summer-house while the crowd was on the terrace, you marched her off to see a lavender hedge. I never knew you so tactless and stupid before. Dittisham was perfectly furious."

"Yes," said Quip, blandly, selecting a very large carnation to put in his buttonhole; "anger makes him look quite decent, doesn't it?"

"Why did you?"

"Because Patience—I mean her future grace of Dittisham—begged me not to leave them alone."

"You could have made some excuse."

"Not without being unkind," said Quip. He suddenly reveled in the memory of that frantic appeal in Patty's eyes, and her imperious yet terrified *sotto voce*, "Quick! Come with us."

The whole attitude of this child was deliciously unconventional, magnificently trustful. He was amazed at it, but far more amazed at himself. Here he was, in mid-season, relegating his duties to an unworthy sub, and idling in gardens while missing all the latest gossip before Ascot in the Parks, in order that he might watch a process very much akin to the hunting of a butterfly, a poor creature destined to be caught in the long run. He, the great Quip of Mayfair, was actually troubling his head sorely as to the morality of a marriage with love on one side only, and he had, after years of cynicism, swallowed the stupendous fact that, in the eyes of a girl, a dukedom does not condone every sort of idiocy in an effete youth.

"Go on being kind, Quip, dear," said Lady Mary, laying a lovely hand on his arm; "go and lure Dittisham

here, and keep him till I send Patience out, and then vanish."

Mr. Quipstaffe did not promise to vanish, but he departed on his friendly errand, cursing himself.

Outside the duchess's morning-room he paused. The French window was open, and he heard her rich contralto in scorn and entreaty.

"Stand in the furthest corner and go back to the second point of the speech: 'The history of the English constitution is the history of the development of a national character, second to none in its magnificence.'"

"Magnificence," bleated the duke, from the other end of the room.

"Speak up, Dit!" shouted the duchess. "What is the good of my slaving to write your speeches, if you can't use your penny trumpet better than that?"

"I'll rehearse him in the garden, duchess," volunteered Quip, looking in.

"I don't trust you, Quip," she answered, with a meaning look. "Keep that sweet Chenies girl away from him," she murmured, out of the window.

"I swear," said Quip, wildly. A certain paragraph in that morning's *Linkman* was slowly burning a hole in his pocket. His head was spinning.

"I must give some orders in the stables," called Dittisham, "and then I'll come."

Quip wandered slowly back to the Summer-house below the terraced garden, asking himself whether he should take the next train to town, or insist that Patience accept the duke in his presence. He tried to imagine his satisfaction at this result. Oddly enough, the anticipation presented a most unpleasant irritation, culminating in utter blankness. He began to detest his life, himself, his calling. All the pleasant bribes he had accepted rose and stalked past him in the sunshine like ghouls. True, he had never extorted them, but his flip-pant tongue had been his greatest temptation as well as his trusty staff

of life. There were sundry transactions in which— Well, it was of no use to look back. These gifts, even under their ugliest name of bribes, hurt no one but the recipient. At any rate, there was no pocket interest in this case. He left the little kiosk and walked out into the sun, to escape the ghouls. And there, flying across the lawn to him with the fragrance of morning, was Patience.

"Oh, I am so glad it is you! I have been wanting to see you all the morning," she cried. Her lids were tinged with faint purple, there were spots of fire in her cheeks. She dived into a silken pocket, and brought out a newspaper cutting.

"Look at that! Read it! It's shameful! I am *not* engaged to anyone. I won't marry the duke. How dare people put these things in? It's actually in our local paper. Surely it ought to be contradicted by—by my people."

"You must bear the burdens of renown," muttered Quip, searching for words.

"I hate you!" said Patience, stamping her foot. "If I thought you had anything to do with putting this nonsense in the papers I would never speak to you or any man again. But as you know how I dislike Dittisham you can scarcely have gone so far as that." She turned coldly on her heel, but started back.

"He is coming," she said. "I can't—I won't see him. This Summer-house is a perfect trap. I'll hide, and then you can get him away."

Dittisham strolled into the Summer-house a moment after Patience had fled behind it.

"I'm hard hit, old chap," he began.

"You generally are," said Quip. "What's the tune? Come away to bowls and tell me; I want some exercise."

"I wish you wouldn't make vulgar retorts," snapped Dittisham.

"Oh, come along," said Quip, peevishly, trying to draw him out of the Summer-house.

"Why can't you leave me alone?"

asked his grace, strolling gently to the door. He took his stand in the shade of the roof and rolled a cigarette, mournfully. "Look here," he continued, aggressively, "we've been overdoing those little hints in the papers, Quip. The girl is furious. Lady Mary has been rowing me—all the same, she says Patience is tremendously in love with me. Of course, girls are full of ideals, you know."

"Shut up!" said Quip, rudely, with a suppressed imprecation.

"All right," said his friend, in mild surprise; "all I mean is that we've overdone the paragraphs, and that my photo and the girl's will be in the papers unless we stop it. We'll contradict all statements emphatically, for a week or two. I've made a sort of draft; it will put her 'stepship' off the scent till Ascot is over."

"You great fool, you—" jerked Quip.

There was a scuffle, and the duke was forcibly dragged through the gate, just as a girl in white, with burning face, shot past them.

Quip gave chase, and his grace, gaping, rearranged his collar and made his way back to the house.

IV

NEXT morning, in Mayfair, Quip's clerks were busy, and barterings for the portraits of engaged couples went on busily as usual between his myrmidons and the weekly papers. But Quip himself was not to be seen. He paced his own den ceaselessly, and Patience's look of blue-eyed misery and distrust, as she waved him angrily back after the Summer-house episode, burned steadily into his very soul. Presently, Dittisham, in riding-dress, plunged up the stairs and burst in, hilarious and aggressive.

"Look here," he began, cheerfully. Quip took no notice.

"Got a liver?" queried his friend. "So have I. I'll have a whiskey and soda." Quip tugged at the bell and resumed his walk.

"Quip," continued Dittisham, grave-

ly, "my revered mamma has been at me again; but I'm not going to give in. Lady Mary took Patience back to town yesterday after you left; so I came up by the last train. It is much easier to speak to Patience in her cousin's house, and better form. The duchess has someone in her eye for me. She is coming up this morning. That's why I got up so early. I know the sort of woman her stepship generally gets hold of, someone with heaps of money and some awful drawback, hereditary deafness or fits. Fits are awful things! If a girl doesn't have them herself, they can descend through her brother to the children. And how the dickens am I to find out if the brother has fits?"

"If she had a brother, would he have fits?" murmured Quip, deliriously.

"What our family wants is building up; we want fresh blood, a healthy strain. I want my son—" he thumped the table melodramatically—"to be a man first, and a peer of England after. I want my children to be men and women, Quip, proud of—of—"

"Their father," suggested Quip, daggers in his eyes.

"—and of their position," continued the other, "jolly, straight-limbed boys and girls." He sipped his whiskey, lovingly. "That little Chenies girl is the wife for me; a true woman, Quip, sweet and womanly. I want her—" his voice grew husky with emotion—"to be the mother of my son, Quip. And Quip, old chap, marriage won't make a bit of difference between old friends, I promise you. By the way, I should like to make that hundred, which I want to give you in honor of many a kind act, into two. It's a bargain, old chap. And she's an angel, and she loves me!" He helped himself to more whiskey, and sighed.

"You'll make no more bargains with me as long as I live!" thundered Quip, turning on his visitor. "I'll not help you any longer to screen your escapades and smooth over

things with the duchess. Now go!" he said. "I've done with you!"

"How dare you!" screamed Dittisham.

"I dare very well," said Quip, contemptuously. "You know what your life has been till now. How about that yachting scandal, and Miss Pussie Pinks, and that little matter down at the 'Pav,' which costs you an annuity of several hundreds? And what will Miss Chenies say to Miss Pussie Pinks if they meet?"

"What's that to you?" said the duke, hitting at Quip.

"Everything," said Quip, with zest, parrying the blow.

"How about your own life?" said Dittisham, plunging at him. "How do you make your money, Quip? A nice sort of profession, loafing about boudoirs and ferreting out society secrets to sell, isn't it? You would better hang out a sign, 'Married while you wait,' eh, Quip? And commissions on successful alliances—what about those, Quip? Oh, fie!"

But Quip's hand held Dittisham by the collar, and the piping voice died away in gasps as the grip tightened, both men falling heavily forward on the table.

"When I have quite finished with you," roared Quip, "my man will see you home. Don't be afraid; your nose isn't broken, only enlarged."

When Dittisham had been tenderly helped into a hansom, Quip breathed deeply, ordered luncheon, and dressed to fulfil certain engagements. He wanted time to think, before he presented himself at Hill street in the afternoon to inquire for Patience. On the way there he absently bought an evening paper, without noticing that it was a fifth-rate rag. In heavy type there burst on him the details of the scene that morning in Jermyn street. Round the corner swung a coarse-mouthed newsmonger trumpeting the headline: "Well-known duke and society wit come to loggerheads over a lady!" He stared at the paragraph. "Miss Chenies, the cause of this romantic contest, is the daughter of——"

Quip reeled, the railings of the Park waltzed before him in a black mist. One of his own underlings had been at work here. He laughed, feebly. It was all such a bad dream that he ceased to be surprised at anything, but found himself vaguely wondering whether the man who sold this garbled information had made a good bargain. He hurried to Hill street and demanded Lady Mary. The footman had orders to admit no one.

"Then I must see Miss Chenies," said Quip, firmly.

But Miss Chenies had left for the country by the four o'clock train from Paddington.

When he crawled home he found a telegram from the duchess.

"Come and see me to-morrow," it ran.

"Another scene!" groaned Quip, as he allowed himself to be put into a smoking-suit. Then he wrote his solicitors. After that he sat, tired and sleepless, and thought of Patience till the clocks of St. James's chimed four and the sun rose.

Later that morning he faced the situation, manfully.

The duchess received him in her breakfast gown. Her shoulders were shaking behind the morning paper. She was too convulsed to rise, but motioned him to a chair, and shook her finger at him.

"Oh, Quip, Quip, you really are too naughty! Why did you spoil the shape of Dit's nose?"

"Regrettable, but necessary," said Quip, shortly.

"Don't snap, dear boy, it doesn't suit you. You're a dear! I knew you would keep that girl away from him, though I didn't think violence would be necessary. In future, I shall look after Dit's nuptial arrangements myself. I am most to blame. I really liked the girl, and I gave up the idea of sacrificing her to Dit with a struggle. And now I should like to know what I can do for you. Of course, this silly business is in the papers, and I am sending Dit to some quiet corner in the Black Forest for

baths, where the women are hideous and there are no tables. But you, Quip, must face society."

"I have done with society."

"Oh, don't make me laugh any more. Why should you worry? The girl has left town; you can make it right with Lady Mary."

"It is my intention to follow Miss Chenies."

"A little drive in the Park will soothe you, I think," said her grace, ringing for her maid.

And so they drove, and Quip poured out his soul—that is to say, the very best part of his curiously simple and apparently complex nature—to his shrewd old friend; and Society, seeing them together, exclaimed, and was silenced.

"I wish you would go and look after my Yorkshire property, Quip," said the duchess, affectionately. "You know I'm not mean, and I want a gentleman agent badly. Come and have a talk with me when—when you get back to town."

Then by some subtle understanding the horses' heads were set for Paddington.

"Good luck, Quip!" said his friend, bending from her big barouche, her eyes full of a kindly moisture.

He traveled down to Oxfordshire in a dream, and stumbled out of the train amid a bewildering scent of lilies, gilliflowers and white pinks that made the little country station like a

bower. He walked steadily for three miles, with increasing elation, and came at last to a turnpike. Beyond that was a hill, on which old red-brick houses clustered and looked down on the lush green stretches of water meadows. At the foot of the hill was a forge. He stopped there, remembering his conversation with Patience at the wedding. Suddenly he threw off his coat, and stepped into the smithy.

"Let me have a try, too," he said, laughing.

The sweat poured down his face and the sparks flew, and he laughed at his want of dexterity. He laid down the hammer when he had had enough, and turned to fetch his coat and wipe his forehead.

And there, not ten paces away, on the garden steps of one of her cottager friends, stood Patience, very pale, and speechless.

"Miss Chenies," said Quip, "I want to make horseshoes—or their equivalent. Will you cheer me on? I'm such a beginner."

He went up to her, and took both her hands.

"Life isn't long enough for explanations," he said. "I want to begin the horseshoes at once, and then—Patience!"

She drew her hands away and fiddled nervously with her hair, then abruptly turned. But in turning she looked over her shoulder, in such a way that Quip rejoiced forever and ever.



SAD INDEED!

"POOR Cholly met with a terrible accident."

"What was it?"

"Concussion of the brain. A piece of advice someone gave him went in one ear and was blockaded."



IF those who are good had more of the sinners' activity, and sinners had more of the inertia of the former, it wouldn't be half so bad to be either.

BALLADE OF THE OUTWARD-BOUND

HO! for the Summer trip, and ho!
 For far resorts the other side!
 The vast ships fear no winds that blow,
 And only wait the turn of tide.
 Dame Fashion cons her season's guide,
 And, safe-bestowed and well-begowned,
 Writes débutante and blushing bride
 First on the list of outward-bound.

The world's away. Its brilliant show
 To-day fares over oceans wide.
 The season points the hour, and so
 Straightway a thousand leagues divide.
 And Gossip, still the Argus-eyed,
 Utters, with no uncertain sound,
 The news that may not be denied—
 First on the list of outward-bound.

My lady, too. The blinds are low,
 Dark curtains hall and boudoir hide;
 For, when the mandate came, "Let's go,"
 Could she, true Fashion's belle, abide?
 Hither and yon Dan Cupid hied,
 The town and countryside around,
 Till at the slip her name he spied—
 First on the list of outward-bound.

ENVOY

Oh, there are landsmen multiplied
 Who would their happy lot were found
 On the brave ships that seaward glide—
 First on the list of outward-bound!

FRANK WALCOTT HUTT.



HER OPINION

HE—It must be embarrassing to meet a girl after she has refused to marry
 you.

SHE—Oh, you won't—er—you might not mind it so much as you think.



AS a general rule, I do not like saints; they are eternally peeping into
 spiritual mirrors to see if their halos are on straight.

HIS COURIER

By O. Henry

IT was neither the season nor the hour when the Park had frequenters; and it is likely that the young lady, who was seated on one of the benches at the side of the walk, had merely obeyed a sudden impulse to sit for a while and enjoy a foretaste of coming Spring.

She rested there, pensive and still. A certain melancholy that touched her countenance must have been of recent birth, for it had not yet altered the fine and youthful contours of her cheek, nor subdued the arch though resolute curve of her lips.

A tall young man came striding through the Park along the path near which she sat. Behind him tagged a boy carrying a suit-case. At sight of the young lady, the man's face changed to red and back to pale again. He watched her countenance as he drew nearer, with hope and anxiety mingled on his own. He passed within a few yards of her, but he saw no evidence that she was aware of his presence or existence.

Some fifty yards further on he suddenly stopped and sat on a bench at one side. The boy dropped the suit-case and stared at him with wondering, shrewd eyes. The young man took out his handkerchief, and wiped his brow. It was a good handkerchief, a good brow, and the young man was good to look at. He said to the boy:

"I want you to take a message to that young lady on that bench. Tell her I am on my way to the station, to leave for San Francisco, where I shall join that Alaska moose-hunting expedition. Tell her that, since she has commanded me neither to

speak nor to write to her, I take this means of making one last appeal to her sense of justice, for the sake of what has been. Tell her that to condemn and discard one who has not deserved such treatment, without giving him her reasons or a chance to explain whatever the cause may be, is contrary to her nature as I have believed it to be. Tell her that I have thus, to a certain degree, disobeyed her injunctions, in the hope that she may yet be inclined to see justice done. Go, and tell her that."

The young man dropped a half-dollar into the boy's hand. The boy looked at him for a moment with bright, canny eyes out of a dirty, intelligent face, and then set off at a run. He approached the lady on the bench a little doubtfully, but unembarrassed. He touched the brim of the old plaid bicycle cap perched on the back of his head. The lady looked at him coolly, without prejudice or favor.

"Lady," he said, "dat gent on de oder bench sent yer a song and dance by me. If yer don't know de guy, and he's tryin' to do de Johnny act, say de word, and I'll call a cop in t'ree minutes. If yer does know him, and he's on de square, w'y I'll spiel yer de bunch of hot air he sent yer."

The young lady betrayed a faint interest.

"A song and dance!" she said, in a deliberate, sweet voice that seemed to clothe her words in a diaphanous garment of impalpable irony. "A new idea—in the troubadour line, I suppose. I—used to know the gentleman who sent you, so I think it will hardly be necessary to call the police. You may execute your song and

dance, but do not sing too loudly. It is a little early yet for open-air vaudeville, and we might attract attention."

"Aw," said the boy, with a shrug down the length of him, "yer know what I mean, lady. 'Tain't a turn, it's wind. He told me to tell yer he's got his collars and cuffs in dat grip for a scoot clean out to 'Frisco. Den he's goin' to shoot snow-birds in de Klondike. He says yer told him not to send 'round no more pink notes nor come hangin' over de garden gate, and he takes dis means of puttin' yer wise. He says yer refereed him out like a has-been, and never give him no chance to kick at de decision. He says yer swiped him, and never said why."

The slightly awakened interest in the young lady's eyes did not abate. Perhaps it was caused by either the originality or the audacity of the snow-bird hunter, in thus circumventing her express commands against the ordinary modes of communication. She fixed her eye on a statue standing disconsolate in the disheveled Park, and spoke into the transmitter:

"Tell the gentleman that I need not repeat to him a description of my ideals. He knows what they have been and what they still are. So far as they touch on this case, absolute loyalty and truth are the ones paramount. Tell him that I have studied my own heart as well as one can, and I know its weakness as well as I do its needs. That is why I decline to hear his pleas, whatever they may be. I did not condemn him through hearsay or doubtful evidence, and that is why I made no charge. But, since he persists in hearing what he already well knows, you may convey the matter.

"Tell him that I entered the conservatory that evening from the rear, to cut a rose for my mother. Tell him I saw him and Miss Ashburton beneath the pink oleander. The tableau was pretty, but the pose and juxtaposition were too eloquent and evident to require explanation. I left

the conservatory, and, at the same time, the rose and my ideal. You may carry that song and dance to your impresario."

"I'm shy on one word, lady. Jux—jux—put me wise on dat, will yer?"

"Juxtaposition—or you may call it propinquity—or, if you like, being rather too near for one maintaining the position of an ideal."

The gravel spun from beneath the boy's feet. He stood by the other bench. The man's eyes interrogated him, hungrily. The boy's were shining with the impersonal zeal of the translator.

"De lady says dat she's on to de fact dat gals is dead easy when a feller comes spielin' ghost stories and tryin' to make up, and dat's why she won't listen to no soft-soap. She says she caught yer dead to rights, huggin' a bunch o' calico in de hot-house. She side-stepped in to pull some posies, and yer was squeezin' de oder gal to beat de band. She says it looked cute, all right all right, but it made her sick. She says yer better git busy, and make a sneak for de train."

The young man gave a low whistle, and his eyes flashed with a sudden thought. His hand flew to the inside pocket of his coat, and drew out a handful of letters. Selecting one, he handed it to the boy, following it with a silver dollar from his vest-pocket.

"Give that letter to the lady," he said, "and ask her to read it. Tell her that it should explain the situation. Tell her that, if she had mingled a little trust with her conception of the ideal, much heartache might have been avoided. Tell her that the loyalty she prizes so much has never wavered. Tell her I am waiting for an answer."

The messenger stood before the lady.

"De gent says he's had de ski-bunk put on him widout no cause. He says he's no bum guy; and, lady, yer read dat letter, and I'll bet yer he's a white sport, all right."

The young lady unfolded the letter, somewhat doubtfully, and read it.

DEAR DR. ARNOLD: I want to thank you for your most kind and opportune aid to my daughter last Friday evening, when she was overcome by an attack of her old heart-trouble in the conservatory at Mrs. Waldron's reception. Had you not been near to catch her as she fell and render proper attention, we might have lost her. I would be glad if you would call and undertake the treatment of her case.

Gratefully yours,

ROBERT ASHBURTON.

The young lady refolded the letter, and handed it to the boy.

"De gent wants an answer," said the messenger. "Wot's de word?"

The lady's eyes suddenly flashed on him, bright, smiling and wet.

"Tell that guy on the other bench," she said, with a happy, tremulous laugh, "that his girl wants him."



TRIOLET

THE winds bring me the memory of you,
 The orchard scent of Spring is in the air.
 How softly am I bathed, made white anew!
 The winds bring me the memory of you,
 And waft away the dust of days untrue,
 Till lo! your image lies uncovered there.
 The winds bring me the memory of you,
 The orchard scent of Spring is in the air.

EDWARD BRODERICK.



RIPOSTE

A CERTAIN man of letters entertained at dinner a number of eminent contemporaries. Several of the courses had been served before it became obvious that Professor Smythe and Professor Browne, who were seated side by side, were apparently oblivious of each other's presence, while assiduously devoting themselves to the viands before them.

Professor Smythe, being rather a sensitive man, presently became cognizant of the attention he was inviting on himself. Therefore, crushing his enmity for the time being, he turned to his adversary, and, in a most engaging manner, said:

"Browne, my head rings; can you account for it?"

For a moment Professor Browne's brows contracted, while courtesy and animosity contended. Then he smiled indulgently, as he replied:

"Naturally. It is hollow."

The silence became oppressive. Finally it was broken by Professor Smythe, who asked:

"And does your head never ring, my friend?"

"Never," came the response.

"Ah," reflectively, "so I thought. It is cracked!"

And each philosopher applied himself, diligently, to the course before him.

HASTINGS-BAILEY.

THE FROZEN VIPER

(Æsop Enlightened)

CONGEALED was the snake,
 And the husbandman saw it—
 Concluded to thaw it
 For charity's sake.
 So into his pocket he stuck it with care,
 And—late from the tavern—forgot it was there.

Uncertain is life!
 Ere his homing was over,
 A rascally rover
 Drew nigh with a knife;
 Said, "Hold up your hands! Thanks—you're awfully kind!"
 And went through his pockets for what he could find.

The viper, thawed out
 And restored to enjoyment,
 For pleasant employment
 Was casting about,
 And seeing a finger invading his berth
 Bit into the stranger for all he was worth.

And this was the last
 Of the snake and the stranger:
 The affable granger
 Triumphantly passed.

MORAL

Be kind to the wicked, whatever you do—
 Their foibles are sure to be useful to you.

FRANCIS DANA.



JUST SO!

"WELL, the evening of life isn't as pleasant as the morning!"
 "Certainly not. Still, the charm of the morning consisted largely of
 pleasant evenings!"



"A LITTLE learning is a dangerous thing," but a little talent is a fatal one.

A GENTLEMAN BY PROFESSION

By J. A. Ritchie

MR. CUTHBERT HARMBY was a professional diner-out. The earlier part of his day was spent obscurely, so rumor had it, in the pursuit of fortune in the lower reaches of the city. It was further said, and in some quarters believed, that he had an office in one of those "sky-scrapers" that, for the New Yorker, make a first visit to the valley of the Colorado an expedition sadly lacking in novelty; but as to what he did in his office even Rumor, with her hundred tongues, was dumb.

After all, it was not a matter of the slightest consequence to those who gave their good things in exchange for his. Though the commodities differed, the exchange was fair and therefore within the law.

Of his status there could be no question.

His father, the late General Harmby, had been a well-known *bon-vivant* and man-about-town in his day, and from him his son had inherited an excellent social position and an educated palate—certainly no inconsiderable birthright, and it insured recognition.

It was by his own attainments, however, that he fared sumptuously every day, and was, in his degree, a man of mark. These attainments consisted of an agreeable manner and a cultivated wit.

Up to the age of twenty-nine or thirty, Harmby had been regarded as a nice young fellow, who might be expected, in the end, to marry some girl with money, and thereafter, in slightly more imposing fashion, continue to be an agreeable nonentity. It is true that during this first stage, especially toward the end of it, he had now and

then said something worth while, but the *mot*, in each case, falling on unexpectant ears, had failed to rouse attention or secure currency.

Gradually, however, and almost imperceptibly, Cuthbert Harmby came to be considered, by discriminating hostesses, as a rather desirable man for a dinner party, especially a small dinner party. There were several women and one or two girls who had gradually come to the conclusion that his talk was more interesting than that of the ordinary young man with whom they went in to dinner. They spoke of this in moments of intimacy, at the hair-brushing hour at country house parties, and thus his vogue increased.

Distinguished strangers, too, of both sexes, had given evidence on more than one occasion of being impressed by his conversation. They even went the length of asking who he was.

"As Harmby said the other day," or, "Have you heard Cuthbert Harmby's latest?" were phrases that began to have a familiar sound. And presently it was apparent to everyone that this amiable young gentleman had "arrived." He had become, as he said himself—for he quite realized the situation—"an indispensable aid to digestion."

That was ten years ago. He was now forty, and the pace had told. He was growing a little tired. At even the best houses he had latterly more than once allowed an evening to pass without any better offering than a revised proverb: "Marriage is a lottery in which there are no blanks and no prizes—only surprises," or some such inanity.

Privately, of late, this very matter

of marriage had been increasingly the subject of his most sincere cogitations, and in his thoughts presented itself to him in an aspect quite other than that indicated by his irony.

An existence *en garçon*, once so full of green delights, had latterly grown arid. He perceived clearly enough that, as the years went by, it must become more and more so, until, at last, it spread out into a parched, gray waste—long, lonely years, devoid of companionship or human sympathy, wherein he should be ministered to, in the matter of his bodily needs, by hirelings whose sole interest in their master would be that, at a nominated day, they should receive their wage. And finally, from sheer old age, after incredible difficulty, retarded by professional nurses and eminent physicians from accomplishing an easy dissolution, death and an unwept grave would be his fate.

Mr. Cuthbert Harmby had definitely decided to marry, to create for himself a home, wherein, if not to live at ease, at least to die in comfort.

Miss Enid Lane was little more than half Harmby's age. In her third season, *rusée* and admirably at ease on all occasions, she never failed to create the impression that, despite her long frocks, invariably of the smartest if simplest, and turned-up hair, she was, after all, only a precocious child who had somehow found her way into the councils of the grown-ups. She spoke always with the unconscious candor, or what seemed the unconscious candor, of a child. She had, nevertheless, an extraordinary knowledge of the world, and chattered the most amazing gossip without, apparently, a thought of evil.

The unseasoned rather than the veteran suffered most severely at her hands. The latter smiled indulgently, and spoke of her as a "nice, even a dear little thing"—the "little" having no reference to her stature, for she was at least of average height, but rather to something pleasingly diminutive in her character and manner. Oddly enough, her own sex were gen-

erally equally amused and indulgent, and this despite the fact that they knew her faults, which were not few.

And Harmby, for whom the starry eyes of innocence had no charm, found this amazing child charming. She appeared to him, a little jaded as he was after the burden and heat of his heyday, as a vision of Spring seen across the footlights—nature in her greenest and tenderest mood, tempered by art.

The girl herself at first disliked this popular gentleman. She found him dull, as, on occasion, if the truth must be told, he very well could be. Once convinced of the justness of her conclusions in this regard, founded on her own experience of his conversational ability as exemplified by a few commonplaces, dropped sparingly at infrequent intervals, she took occasion to tell him frankly what she thought.

He was delighted. Thereafter he made it plain to everybody that this curious child pleased him greatly.

Miss Lane was both flattered and puzzled by this preference, and, as well, strangely gratified by the queer, clever things this out-of-the-common sort of man seemed to find it so easy to say to her. She grew to regard him as almost a necessity. Her feeling was not quite love, but it was perilously akin thereto. She liked to be with him, to have him talk to her in his odd manner, never wholly serious, nor yet entirely frivolous. The conversation of many an agreeable and well-intentioned youth, conducted on the Ollendorf plan, "Have you seen my new horse?" was made to seem vapid by comparison. Still, she by no means relinquished her suzerain rights over those sprightly young men who had come within her sphere of influence.

Of these, Mr. Billy Vanalstine was the most assiduous in his efforts to secure court favor. Twenty-five, good-looking, a player on crack polo teams, and the only son of his father, whose fortune, as was well known, was in eight figures, he was not a *parti* to be discouraged. Miss Enid Lane encouraged him shamefully.

Nevertheless, Mr. Cuthbert Harmby intended to marry Miss Enid Lane, her and no other; not because she had from her maternal grandfather, in her own right, a million and a half, but—well, because that was his intention.

It was five minutes of eight o'clock in the evening, and it would take Mr. Harmby the better part of twenty minutes to drive from his chambers to his host's front door, whose dinner hour was eight; yet he stood in the middle of his very comfortable bachelor sitting-room, placidly turning over the leaves of a small but expensively bound note-book, occasionally stopping to read with a pensive air the whole of some scribbled page. His man, who had been warming his furlined great-coat at the cheerful blaze in the grate—for the month was January, and a nipping night air awaited him—came forward.

"Your coat, sir."

Harmby woke as from a reverie. "Thank you, Carter."

Closing the little book he slipped it into the inner breast-pocket of his evening coat, where it lay snugly beside the small gold cigarette-case that Miss Lane had lately given him. Then he extended his arms into the comfortable garment the servant deftly held.

"Have I everything?" Harmby asked, thinking of his pocket-handkerchief, his match-box and his pencil-case.

"Yes, sir," replied the man, unhesitatingly. He was a model servant, and knew his master's needs.

"Then I must be off."

Handing Harmby his hat, stick and gloves, Carter opened the door and stood respectfully aside as the latter went out.

A few minutes later Harmby's practiced eye was taking in the diagram of his host's dinner table. His seat was by Mrs. Armitage—Mrs. Willie Armitage—thirty-five, very much of the world, good-looking, with the good looks of her age, assisted slightly by art, and his own very good friend; and on his left Miss Enid Lane.

He admired immensely the cleverness of his hostess in making this arrangement, and he felt excellently disposed toward her and all his world.

Mrs. Armitage's greeting was a smile that seemed rather of the eyes than the lips; he responded in kind. They were old friends, who had once been dear ones, and words are of little use when there is nothing left to say. Force of habit, however, impelled the lady to pick up the thread of small-talk where she found it, for she had caught her hostess's last words to him, and as she took Harmby's arm she asked, lightly:

"Was Kitty calling you names for being late?"

"On the contrary, she was paying me a compliment."

"And you can still find delight in flattery?"

"It is the one pleasure that never palls."

"What an inveterate phrase-maker you are! Tell me, how do you make your epigrams?"

"Ah, that's my secret; but between you and me, I first model them in clay."

"Oh, you're too absurd! By the way, who is your neighbor on your left?"

"Miss Enid Lane."

Mrs. Armitage made a little face indicative of dissatisfaction. "Well, remember, I shall be *exigeante*," she said, warningly. "I shall expect at least half of your attention."

"You shall have it all."

"We shall see," and there was a suspicion of hardness in the three words.

As they had taken their seats, Miss Lane's initial remark had been short and simple, but entirely satisfactory to Harmby.

"This is nice," she said. It was her evident sincerity that made it important. Mr. Harmby appreciated it. He felt that she really was a "dear little thing," but force of habit impelled him to respond with a mannered phrase rather than a word equally sincere.

"It is better than 'nice.' It is intelligent."

"You're devoted to 'intelligence,' aren't you?"

"I worship it as one might a star."

Miss Lane's bright eyes twinkled a little maliciously. "Because it is so far above you, I suppose?"

Harmby hesitated while a servant placed before him a plate of soup, and then answered her with the utmost gravity: "You are quite right; and because it is a thing both rare and fine."

"But what is intelligence?"

"The faculty of making other people think you know what you know you don't know."

"It sounds complicated and rather deceitful."

"All life is a deceit; each of us deceives and is deceived."

"I thought that nowadays the world was growing so wise that no one was ever deceived."

"The world is certainly growing wiser every day, but there will always be one person whom anyone can deceive."

"And that is?"

"Himself."

Mrs. Armitage, who had exhausted the weather with her neighbor on her right, turned toward Harmby.

"I thought you were going to say 'a husband.'"

"How could I? A husband is the one person who is never deceived."

"Why?"

"He knows the symptoms."

"One can only judge by what one sees, and it seems to me that half the women one knows are temporarily resident in some other state than their own, while their friends take sides and divide into hostile camps."

Their hostess caught the last word. She had some idea the Adirondacks made the topic. "What are you saying, my dear, about camps?"

"I was speaking of our little dissensions, like the Compton-Ashley affair."

"Mrs. Armitage was very justly complaining that society nowadays is divided into two great camps—those who are still camped and those who have decamped."

Everybody smiled and glanced at

his neighbor for confirmation of his impression that Harmby had said something rather smart—something to be passed on.

"And to which camp do you belong?" his hostess asked.

"To neither."

"Oh!"

"I belong to the Red Cross and bring first aid to the wounded of each."

"I hope your services are appreciated."

"They are. Those whom I serve very frequently never speak to me again, which is often a distinct gain."

"Speaking of war," said Mrs. Ferland, the strong-minded, turning to Sir John, the diplomat, "is it not a blot on our boasted civilization?"

The diplomat smiled.

"After all, it is true that man is a fighting animal," he admitted.

"The man who, at the bottom of his heart, doesn't love fighting is only a woman in disguise," said Harmby.

Miss Enid Lane's "Oh!" was one of indignation, and even Mrs. Armitage and his hostess seemed conscious of an attack on their caste. Harmby glanced at the protesting girl on his left, with the glint of a smile in his tired eyes, and added in his usual carefully modulated voice: "And the woman who doesn't love fighting with her whole heart, top and bottom, doesn't exist at all."

Sir John nodded his smiling approval. He enjoyed the paradox. He considered that he was being very well served. People nowadays so seldom provide more at their dinners than food and drink.

Miss Enid Lane was instantly appeased.

"I like you for saying that; but if you think in that way about fighting, why didn't you go to Cuba, like—like—?"

Harmby smiled. "Like Billy over there?" he asked, indicating Vanalstine by his glance.

"Yes."

"My dear child, have you considered what it means to dig trenches

at my age, or sleep in one's clothes for a week at a time, wet clothes at that?"

"But a man ought to be willing to make sacrifices for his country."

"I am quite willing to sacrifice my life for my country at any time, if need be."

"Oh, you are?"

"But not my comfort."

The girl, never quite prepared for this inveterate *farceur's* last word, made a little face—permissible tactics in the young and pretty—and said, with the air of one presenting a grievance, "I don't believe you can do anything but talk."

"It is true that I never have done anything else."

"And people who go in for conversation are always so affected—you're awfully affected."

"You are quite right. There is no such thing as conversation without affection."

"There you go again. You always say things as if they had just come straight from a book. I believe you have a book with all those things in it. Haven't you?"

Harmby laughed. For the life of him he couldn't help it. It was the laugh of detected guile, but for the moment he quite shook with the force of it.

"I have," he admitted, as soon as he was able to speak; and the girl's face was so ludicrously astonished that he laughed again.

"I don't see anything to laugh at," she said, a little petulantly; and Harmby was compelled to admit that no more did he.

"I'm going to talk to Billy across the table," she announced.

"And I'm going to eat my dinner," Harmby replied, helping himself to the *entrée* to which his hostess attached so much importance. He found it excellent.

"Have you joined the Trappists?"

Mrs. Armitage's bantering query roused Harmby from the little reverie he had permitted himself on find-

ing that both his neighbors were for the moment offering their smiles in other markets than his own.

"No; but I feel that some day I shall be well fitted to join the order."

"And when will that be?"

"When I shall have nothing more to say on any subject."

"Will it be soon?"

"Quite soon."

"How absurd! You know you talk like a book."

"Quite so; that is the dangerous symptom in my case. A book must have an ending."

"But it sometimes has a sequel."

"Never a successful one."

"I see you are in a pessimistic mood."

"I never was in a more hopeful one."

"What is your hope?"

"To be allowed to talk common-places for the rest of my days, and to dine a great deal at home."

"It is just as well Kitty cannot hear you. What do you mean by 'dine at home'—at your club?"

"N-o." He uttered the negative rather grudgingly, and Mrs. Armitage glanced at him sharply.

"You don't mean—?" she began, in a tone curiously intense, and then left the remainder of the sentence unuttered.

"Why not? Men do settle down sometimes, don't they?"

"But you mustn't." Her voice was low, and had in it a note of tender imperiousness. "Bertie, do you hear, you mustn't ever! You won't, will you?"

He smiled his assurance. "I won't ever!" And Mrs. Armitage believed him because she wished to believe. Nevertheless, Mr. Cuthbert Harmby's determination remained unaltered.

Mr. Billy Vanalstine's conversational powers were not well adapted to an exchange of instances at long range. He fired a parting shot, and went out of action.

Miss Enid Lane turned to Harmby. "I am to have my portrait painted," she announced.

"By whom?" that gentleman asked,

simulating a polite interest. She mentioned an artist's name. Harmby shrugged his shoulders ever so slightly.

"It will be a compromise," he said.

"A compromise? With what?"

"With truth."

"Don't you think artists are ever honest?"

"They try to be; not many succeed."

"How is one to know if an artist is honest or not?"

"His work furnishes the information. Do you remember that Russian's pictures here some years ago? But of course you don't. It was before you were born—ten years ago, at least."

"Before I was born? You mean Verestchagin?"

"Yes."

"What did his pictures say he was?"

"A man incapable of guile."

"You believe an artist reveals himself in his work?"

"Certainly; all creation is confession."

"I wish you would paint a picture."

"Why?"

"I should like to know what you are."

"Some day I will tell you what I am."

"I sha'n't believe you when you do."

"That is the reason I shall not have the slightest hesitation in telling the exact truth."

"How aggravating you are!"

"I hope so."

"Why?"

"It is one's surest guarantee against neglect."

"Oh, you are right; certainly you won't be neglected," she said, with a smile, the meaning of which he found it difficult to determine. Nevertheless, he felt that, despite the triviality of their chatter, a wind of circumstance had wafted him to the haven where he would be. The affair might now be taken up again at a more convenient season.

He observed Mr. Billy Vanalstine direct toward Miss Enid Lane a glance and smile indicative of an understanding complete and tender, but he did

not consider that this in any way affected him. Afterward this struck him as a curious instance of the outweighing in the scales of consciousness of one idea by another more absorbing.

When the men joined the ladies in Mrs. Ferrand's pretty drawing-room, Mr. Harmby was duly reported to the latter as having been in capital form. For his part he smilingly disclaimed the possession of unusual cause for elation. A moment later he felt that he would be justified in asserting the exact contrary.

Billy Vanalstine, unimpeded by the necessity for acknowledging plaudits, had secured such an advantageous anchorage by Miss Enid Lane that any thought of a cutting-out expedition that Harmby, or other predatory craft, might entertain must be abandoned. So, presently, with Mrs. Armitage as convoy, he set sail for the second dance of the "Forty Thieves," wherein he talked both wisely and well.

Harmby had bidden his hostess good night a few moments later, and had almost reached the door, when she stopped him.

"Oh, by the way, Bertie, of course you've heard the news?"

"I assure you I haven't, whatever it is."

Mrs. Ferrand seemed surprised.

"Didn't Enid Lane tell you?"

"Not a word."

"She's engaged to Billy Vanalstine. They're to be married immediately after Easter."

"Engaged to Billy Vanalstine?"

"Yes."

Mr. Cuthbert Harmby had rarely been so thoroughly taken aback. He felt he had nothing to say, yet must say something.

"Capital! It couldn't be better."

"I thought you would be glad to hear of it."

"I am. It is sure to be a most successful match; they are so entirely unsuited to each other."

"Cynic!"

"You mean the opposite."

"Explain."

"Scratch a cynic, and you will find a sentimentalist."

"I fear one would need nails *à la chinois* to insure success for one's quest in your case."

"I hope you are right."

"Why?"

"True serenity lies in the hide. I regard the rhinoceros as the most fortunate of beasts."

"Oh, you're dreadfully thin-skinned about some things."

"For instance?"

"I'm sure you'd never get over being refused."

"Who has betrayed me?"

"Oh, I don't believe you ever asked anyone. Up to the present you've been too self-centred."

"The rhinoceros certainly has distinct advantages."

"You know I'm right. But I really did think for a little while that you seriously contemplated asking a certain girl to marry you."

"My dear Mrs. Ferrand!"

"In fact, Enid Lane. Of course, it was absurd."

"Absurd' is not the word for it." He offered his hand again in farewell, and added, in his airiest tone, "The *entrée* was most excellent."

His hostess smiled, and pressed his

fingers with all good will. "Good night, Bertie, once more; and thanks for helping the thing along."

At the hall door Harmby paused to light a cigarette, and, yielding to an impulse, took from his pocket the little note-book he had placed there earlier in the evening. He ran his eye through the pages, and said to himself, wearily, "Only the beginning of January, and a whole fortnight's supply gone, wasted!" Then, in a very gentle tone, he added the one word, "Damn!"

The footman, who stood with his hand on the door-knob, showed not the slightest trace of having heard this soliloquy, but as Harmby closed the tiny volume and replaced it in his pocket, the servant, looking at his fellow on the other side of the hall, solemnly closed one eye before he threw open the door.

Mr. Cuthbert Harmby, with a little sigh, went out into the frosty blue of the Midwinter night, a sadder and a wiser man. He had learned that, to appreciate the extent of one's interest in a pet project, one must fail in it; that failure is a magnifying-glass through which the mind's eye sees monstrously enlarged all the advantages of the object for which one has striven, only to fall short of attaining.



RATIOCINATION

"MAMMA!"

"What?"

"If two birds of a feather flock together, do three birds flock three gether?"



NO KICK COMING!

GERALDINE—Pa says his foot is asleep.

GERALD—Tell him not to wake it on my account.

SONNETS TO A LOVER

I—SUNSET ON THE SHORE

THE last white banners of the fleeting day
 Had trailed along the summit of the hill,
 And, as a maid to lover's kiss a-thrill,
 A crimson flush upon the waters lay;
 Soft, tangled lights shone through the irised spray
 That gleamed afar with alien splendor, till
 The thronging sea-birds' plaintive notes were still,
 And sunset changed to shadow, then to gray.

But out across the sea that moved so slow,
 As, half-asleep and dreaming of the clime
 Where yesterday these tides had laved the shore,
 There stole the tender light of afterglow—
 Like love that lingers for a little time,
 And leaves remembered sweetness evermore.

II—ROSES

Deep dews of June upon thy roses lay,
 Of April rains and Summer sweetness wrought,
 And chalice in the blossoms thou hast brought
 To give me pleasure for a fleeting day.
 Love's dearest, sweetest messengers are they,
 For, like a bee in satin petals caught,
 May hide an unsuspected tender thought
 That every opening blossom must betray.

And haply, if sometimes I find surcease
 Of tears and sorrow in a lover's gift,
 That, with its clustered bloom, my breast adorns,
 It is because thy love hath brought me peace,
 And made through cloud and storm a starry rift—
 Because with roses thou hast hid my thorns.

MYRTLE REED.



A MAN told a woman a cunningly contrived story. The woman did not understand, but she would not be shamed, so she laughed. And then the man judged her wrongly.



“ROCKS” are not always a firm foundation for domestic happiness,

ADELA

By Justus Miles Forman

ADELA LUISE went to the window of her dressing-room and pushed aside the curtains—very filmy lace curtains, with the Royal arms worked into the centre of each—and looked out into the sunlight of the early morning. The lawn sloped away broadly beneath her, for the schloss sits on a hill, to meet the gardens and the park with its rows of gloomy-looking ilex trees.

There were firs beyond, tall straight firs, and a Summer-house among them, white and red, and beyond the Summer-house, a great broad flood, was the Danube, slipping swiftly and quietly by under the morning mists. In the distance there were blue hills, so ghostly and unreal that they blended imperceptibly with the clouds on the horizon.

A peacock screamed from the gardens, and a scent of roses and mignonette came on the breeze. Adela Luise sniffed luxuriously, and began to sing a little French *chanson*. Then she paused, and turned her head toward the Countess Amélie, who was arranging her yellow hair before a mirror.

"At what time do you suppose he'll get up?" she demanded. "I don't know anything about Englishmen's habits, except from novels, but I've a notion that they rise at some dreadful hour and do things out of doors."

The Countess Amélie impressed a hand-glass into service, and regarded the rear elevation of her coiffure with some pleasure.

"I think a black bow on top would be rather effective," said she, "just a

little one." She turned the contents of a none too neatly arranged drawer on the floor, and abstracted from the heap a bit of black velvet ribbon.

"There's someone in the gardens," said the Princess Adela, presently; "some man, and he's a stranger, too. Maybe he's one of the duke's suite."

Amélie dropped her ribbons inconspicuously, and dashed to the window.

"There," said the princess, "beyond the arbors. He's had the impertinence to pick one of my *Duchesse d'Alençons* and stick it in his coat. Do you think he is one of the Englishmen?"

But the Countess Amélie had leveled an opera-glass on the man in the rose gardens and was performing an impromptu dance, accompanied by excited giggles.

"It's he!" she cried, "it's the duke himself, I tell you!" She was deprived of the opera-glass with a suddenness that nearly wrecked that instrument and her elaborate coiffure at the same time.

The princess stared, breathing rather quickly.

"The—the duke, Amélie!" she cried, half under her breath, "the duke—oh, no, no; it can't be—why he—" She was silent for a long time, with the glass at her eyes and her breath coming very hurriedly. Then, after a while, "He's tall," she breathed, as if to herself. "He's tall, taller than I had hoped—and he carries his head like—like a hero in a play. Ah, and his face—he's very, very handsome, Amélie; like the picture, but handsomer—he looks so young, too! See

his straight brows and his nice mouth and—and—" She swung about from the window, and dropped the opera-glass.

"I don't believe it's the duke at all!" she cried. "How do you know it's he? Where have you ever seen him before?"

The countess nodded her yellow head.

"It's the duke right enough," she declared. "I saw him last night. I was down in the long hall when the suite arrived. I was behind a portière with Hein—with Alice von Ballenberg."

"Amélie!" said the princess, severely.

"Well, then, with a friend," said the countess, sulkily, "and Heinr—I mean Alice—pointed out the duke—oh, it's he. I'm sure enough of that!"

The princess was again watching the man in the rose gardens, and there was a little flush in her cheeks and a little smile at her lips. The breathing seemed to grow no steadier.

"He's gone," she cried at last; "he's gone into the park." She laid down the glass, and went across the room to the onyx mantel, where there hung alone on the wall a picture, a photograph in a wide frame, and she stood a long time with her arm on the mantel, looking at the picture. When she turned once more, there was a certain brightness in her eyes. She took the Countess Amélie into her arms, and hid a flushed face on that young woman's shoulder.

"Oh, he's dearer than anyone could have hoped!" she whispered, "dearer than I'd dreamed, Amélie! Isn't it— isn't it wonderful? The picture is a dreadful libel. Why, it must have been taken nearly ten years ago, but he looks as young now, and—oh, so much handsomer, and—and—nicer! Isn't it wonderful, dear! And to think I'm going to marry him! Why, I should have fallen in love with him if I'd met him in a crowd—if he were no duke at all, but just some common gentleman. Ah, that high, splendid head of his, dearest! Do you know I

believe I'm just the luckiest girl in all Europe! Only fancy, Amélie, I'm going to marry him! It's all arranged!"

"Maybe he won't like you at all," suggested the countess, brutally.

Adela Luise raised a tragic face.

"Why—why, perhaps he won't!" she gasped. "Perhaps—ah, no, no, dear, he can't—he *must* like me!" She turned to the big mirror. "Am I so dreadful?" she demanded. "Do you think a man wouldn't be apt to—like me?"

The countess seized her, and kissed her with great violence. "You silly little goose!" she cried. "You're probably the most beautiful girl in Europe, and you know it quite well. No living man could help falling in love with you. I want to be near when the duke sees you first! You see, he can't have had any picture of you, because none has been published, except that wretched profile thing, and it doesn't look at all like you. You cheer up. The duke will be following you about like a dachshund in a few hours."

The princess was standing by the window in apparent meditation. Then, all at once, she began to giggle.

"I trust you're not ill," said the countess, regarding her with some disfavor.

"Listen!" cried Adela Luise. "You said you wanted to be near when the duke—when we met each other. So you shall. I'm going down into the gardens now, and shall run upon him, entirely by accident. He doesn't know what I look like, and I'll tell him that I am one of the princess's ladies-in-waiting. It'll be a lark! Then we shall see if he—if he likes me just for myself. Give me that white sunshade, Amélie, and come along—quick, before he finishes his walk."

"But—but the prince!" gasped Amélie. "He will be furious! It's frightfully improper! Oh, you mustn't, you mustn't, really!"

"Father?" inquired Adela Luise, haughtily. "Nonsense! If I can't manage father and his rages by now,

I never shall. Don't be an idiot, Amélie! Come on, if you want to."

The two slipped out of the castle by a side entrance, and, skirting the wide lawn, came down into the rose gardens.

"I shall wait here by the main path," said the princess. "He will probably come back this way. Hide behind that trellis, Amélie, and mind you go away the moment we start talking. Oh, but I—I think I'm growing a little scared! Don't go too far away! Heavens, he's coming!"

Someone was coming leisurely along the narrow path under the ilex trees, someone with a voice, for he was singing Schumann's "Heiden Röslein," and singing it superbly. He had much too fine a voice for a mere duke. Such gifts should be granted to ordinary people who haven't already a high title and world-wide fame and good looks.

He was a rather handsome man in a big, splendid way, and he was apparently enjoying the fresh, sweet morning in full measure, for he swung along lazily in his riding breeches and Norfolk jacket, and sang, between puffs at his briar pipe, as if he owned the whole Danube valley.

Then, very suddenly, he happened on the Princess Adela Luise, and the pipe dropped from his hand to the ground, and he caught his breath sharply, and then stood quite motionless for a long time, staring into her face. It seemed as if he could not tear his eyes from her.

Adela Luise bent a very pink face over the cluster of roses that she held.

"I—I hope," said she, a little unsteadily, "that you have had a—pleasant walk. The mornings here are so cool!" She looked up with a sudden boldness to meet his eyes.

"You are one of the duke's gentlemen?" she inquired.

The man had pulled off his cap, and was making a series of embarrassed bows, very red in the face.

"Why—er—yes—yes, of course," said he. "I beg pardon for staring. It was beastly stupid of me. You see, I—well, I didn't expect to meet anyone at this hour. I was—rather alarmed."

"Oh, dear!" mourned the princess, "am I so dreadful as that?" and she sighed piteously over the roses.

The Englishman laughed. Then, all at once, he grew quite sober again.

"Yes," said he, "yes, you are."

There was an obvious increase of color in the girl's cheeks. "Perhaps then I'd—I'd best go in," she murmured—to the roses.

The Englishman sighed. "Perhaps so," said he.

"Why, then, I won't!" declared the princess. "I shall stop here just to annoy you."

"Thank you," said the Englishman, with some feeling.

The color deepened, but that may have been because he refused to look anywhere save into her face—devoured it with his eyes. It was most trying.

"Won't you tell me something?" he begged, presently. "You have such an advantage of me; you know who I am and you must see that I'm tortured to know about you."

The princess giggled.

"Oh, I'm 'in waiting,'" said she; "I'm one of the princess's ladies. Why don't you pick up that pipe and go on smoking? I like tobacco. I'll tell you a secret, if you'll promise never to let it out, the princess smokes cigarettes herself, when there are no men about. Of course, I don't. I think it's dreadful!" And she made a little gesture of abhorrence, and shook her head, sadly.

There came certain choked sounds from behind one of the trellises, and the Englishman raised his head.

"Dear me," said the princess, calmly, "what can be over there among the vines? A cat, I dare say," she added, turning a venomous face toward the covert.

"But please do go on smoking,

and—and don't let me interrupt your walk."

"May I sit down?" he begged. "I am very, very tired, and it's so nice and green and shady here. Moreover, I like the smell of the roses. If you are one of the princess's ladies it is your solemn duty to entertain me—to entertain all of us, I mean—so you might as well begin your charitable task at once."

Adela Luise looked sternly at his buttonhole.

"Oh—er—yes," said he, "I *have* been stealing roses; only one, though. Do you think she'd mind? Is she very fierce?"

"Terribly," declared Adela Luise, shaking out her skirts and settling down on the grass in the midst of them. "She's a perfect old dragon—I feel so sorry for your poor duke!" she sighed, compassionately.

"Perhaps, though," she ventured, "perhaps he, too, is a dragon. Is he? Tell me about him. The princess has a photograph of him, but it was taken quite ten years ago. Does he look anything like it now?"

The Englishman shook his head.

"Not much," said he. "A man changes a good bit in ten years, you know, especially if he's lived a pretty strenuous sort of life. Of course, the duke looks a bit older, and—and, well, not quite so handsome."

"Older?" cried Adela Luise, in a puzzled tone. "Why I should call him—oh—oh, yes, of course—what was I thinking of?" She looked up into the man's face, and giggled delightedly.

"Older," she repeated, "and, of course, not so handsome. Poor princess! Don't you feel just a bit sorry for her? Still, she's neither beautiful nor young herself. She's at times a most objectionable old party."

The Englishman's eyebrows rose, and there was a certain amused smile about his lips. Adela Luise threw him a swift glance of suspicion. He certainly couldn't know, though.

"Old?" he queried. "Ah, hardly that, I should say. Eighteen, isn't she?"

"I was referring," said Adela Luise, "to the appearance of the princess and to her character rather than to the actual number of her years. Some people can look old at fifteen, you know—if they're ugly enough."

"How long," inquired the Englishman, politely, "how long do you suppose you would remain 'in waiting' if the Princess Adela Luise Victoria should learn your very treasonable sentiments toward her?"

The Princess Adela Luise Victoria saw fit to giggle once more.

"I'm not afraid," she boasted; "I never was afraid of anything." She pulled a deep red rose to bits slowly, smiling down on it, a very curious little smile.

The morning breeze, soft and sweet over the gardens, stirred her hair, blew little waves of it across her brows and eyes. A fleck of sunshine came through the leaves above, and wavered across her head, turning its black to bronze. A golden robin, venturesome through extreme curiosity—and it was a gentleman robin, too—pecked inquisitively at the pointed toe that peeped from under white frills.

"And so," said Adela Luise, "they're going to be married, my princess and your duke. Don't you fancy they must be a bit frightened? What if they shouldn't like each other? Don't you think they must be wondering each what the other will be like? Of course, in our rank—I mean," she cried, hurriedly, "in their rank—" there was the slightest smile from the Englishman—"one doesn't often marry for love; still, they must have had their dreams of it—love—*she* must, anyhow. How they must have wished, sometimes, that they were people free to—to fall in love where they liked, and marry where they fell in love, like—oh, like the rest of—of us! And wouldn't it be beautiful," continued Adela Luise, glancing up with a swift little flushed smile, "if they could actually fall in love with each other! Wouldn't it be beautiful if the—the princess had al-

ready been in love with the duke, for, oh, years and years, long before there was any talk of arranging a marriage? You see, she might be a rather silly and romantic sort of little girl, given to ideals and hero-worship and—and all that sort of thing. And she might have picked out the duke—it's quite possible—for her worship. The duke has had such an extraordinary sort of career, you know, just the one to attract a girl. He's been like a man in a play. I suppose he is a very, very great man, isn't he?"

The Englishman nodded, gravely.

"There is probably no greater general and no cleverer diplomat living," said he.

Adela Luise gasped. "Well, of all the conceit!" she cried.

The Englishman's eyebrows rose a little.

"I mean," she amended, hastily, "that it seems almost like conceit to praise your own chief so highly. Of course, though, you must admire him tremendously!"

"I was about to add," he continued, "that great as he is, he's still by no means worthy of your princess, if she is all they say. I shall be a bit sorry to see the marriage take place. There's frankness for you!"

"How long," inquired Adela Luise, politely, "how long do you suppose you would remain 'in waiting' if the duke should learn of your very reasonable sentiments toward him?"

"I'm not afraid," said he, "for excellent reasons."

The princess saw fit to giggle. "I believe you," she said, with conviction.

The Englishman knocked out his pipe, rather thoughtfully; then he looked into the face of the Princess Adela, who took occasion to blush—for reasons of her own.

"Don't you think," he said, gently, "that we've talked enough about your princess and my duke? I've something much more interesting."

"What," inquired the girl, with a sudden interest in the rose gardens, "what do you want to talk about?"

"You," said he. "I want to tell you a story."

The princess clapped her hands.

"Are there bears in it?" she demanded, "and enchanted castles and sleeping beauties, and—and that sort of thing?"

"No—no bears," said he. "I don't know about the enchanted castles—perhaps. There is a beauty in it, however—a great beauty; the greatest, I fancy, though she wasn't asleep."

He forced one hand inside his collar—it was something of a struggle—and pulled out a long, thin gold chain, that seemed to be fastened about his neck. There was a flat locket at the end, which he opened and handed to the Princess Adela Luise, leaning nearer, so that she might examine it without detaching the chain from his neck. There was a picture in the locket.

The Princess Adela gave a sudden, amazed little cry, and looked up with startled eyes and paling cheeks.

"Why—why—where did you get that? Who ever could have—where did you get that?" she said, swiftly.

"I have had it," said he, "for three years, and how I got it is the story."

He held the locket in his hand a moment, looking down into it with a wonderful softening in his face. Then he snapped the catch, and slipped it once more inside his collar, and raised his eyes to hers. She was still startled, a bit pale, and there was a great light of amazement, of excitement, in her eyes, but no displeasure, it seemed—no anger; rather, something very different.

"That photograph was taken," said the Englishman, "three years ago last Winter, in Vienna. A friend of mine took it with a kodak camera. It wasn't a nice thing to do, and I don't defend it at all; I'm merely glad it was done. He took it as you were coming out from the opera one evening. If you remember, they were trying some new electric lights in the portico of the opera house that night, which were extremely brilliant, so brilliant that one could make an instantaneous

photograph of anyone under them. My friend saw you coming out with some other women and a group of officers, and snapped his camera when you were directly in front of him. No one noticed it. He did it because, as he said, you were the most beautiful thing he had ever seen. He didn't know who you were, and I have never known—till now. Of course, it was a blackguardly thing to do, and I've said I don't defend it in the least. But I begged the picture from him, for all that. The film had been destroyed, so there are no duplicates."

He hesitated a little, and looked away. "I suppose," he went on, "I suppose if I had a lifetime in which to go about it, I could never tell you, never make you understand what it has been to me—the picture. It sounds a bit absurd, doesn't it?—falling in love with a little kodak picture! But that is what I did. I've read of that sort of thing and laughed. I've thought what asses men must be to do such things—sentimental fools! I don't call people sentimental fools any more. It's been with me everywhere for three years. I'd no idea who the—the girl might be. She might be some queen or princess quite beyond my reach; she might be married to another man, though I didn't believe that. But always I knew positively that I'd meet her sometime—and now I've met her! Do you wonder that I was startled this morning when I happened on you? Do you wonder that I stared?"

"And now," murmured the Princess Adela, her face bent low over the roses, "and now that you have met—her?"

"Why, now," said he, gently, "now I must make her love me. Perhaps it will be hard, but—I've found her, thank God!" He leaned forward and touched her hand with his. It set her trembling from head to foot.

"Will you tell me something?" he begged. "Will you tell me what I may call you? Why, I don't even

know your name, and I've loved you for years!"

The Princess Adela looked up at him bravely, and threw out her hands at her two sides in a quick little gesture, as it were, of surrender.

"Ah, can't you guess!" she cried, very low.

But he shook his head with a puzzled frown. "One of the princess's ladies you said," he ventured; "that is all I have to go by. You see, I've never before been south of Vienna."

"Very well, then," declared Adela Luise, "I sha'n't tell. You will find out anyhow, very soon;" and she seemed to derive much amusement from the prospect.

"I hope," said the Englishman, sulkily, "that you're curious to know who I am, for I sha'n't tell you. I shouldn't have thought you had a brutal nature."

Adela Luise laughed till she was weak. Then, after a long time, when she was done with laughing and her face was all sweet seriousness again, save for the little sparkle in her dark eyes, "Tell me more," she said, softly, "about the girl in the locket. What made you fall in—made you care for her? She's so much like other girls, saving a most whimsical spirit and certain defects as to temper! What did you see in her?"

A small hand strayed rashly down among the grasses and hare-bells. It was promptly captured, but there were no tears for its loss.

"Everything," said the man, "everything that one dreams about and loves and worships. I knew she was the loveliest thing God had ever made, and the kindest and the most beautiful—just as I know it now," said he to the small hand. The hand trembled a little. Then it was kissed. Then it trembled again.

"It isn't true!" she cried, just over her breath, "it isn't true! Ah, but it's dear of you to say it! Do you—really believe what you say? Why, then, you don't care who I am, do you? Do you? I might be the prin-

cess or—or somebody's maid, and you wouldn't care? Tell me you wouldn't care!"

"If you were a slavey in the schloss kitchens, it would be the same to me," he said, and held the small hand to his lips. "I'm safe, though, for you aren't a slavey, and you aren't anybody's maid. Ah, but you hold my heart in your two hands! How I've loved you!"

"Three years!" cried the girl, very low—and he held both the small hands now—"three years! And you've been through such trials and dangers and hardships in those three years! You might have been—why, you might have been killed before ever I saw you or—or knew! Tell me about the three years. Have you—?" she stopped, and laughed a moment.

"Have you been with the duke all that time?"

"Yes," said he, "all that time. It was fighting in the Sudan, and then a secret mission to—I mustn't say where—and then fighting again, in South Africa this time. Yes, there have been trials and dangers, but—I had my locket. I knew I shouldn't knock under till I had seen her."

The Princess Adela wrinkled her brows, perplexedly. "But I—I don't quite understand," said she. "You say you were faithful all these years to—to the girl in your locket, and were living just to meet her, yet you come calmly down here to marry my princess—oh, heavens! I—I mean your duke does—I mean—oh, never mind!" and she drew her hands away from him, sharply.

"You stupid little goose!" she cried to herself, "you're giving it all away!"

The Englishman colored somewhat, and frowned. Then he laughed looking at her as if he did not quite make her out.

"You mean," he suggested, "that I ought to be searching for my locket girl instead of coming to betrothal parties? Oh, as for that, I might run upon her here as well as anywhere

else—and you see I did! My coming here must have been inspired!"

Adela Luise regarded him with some suspicion. "I wonder if he knows!" she said, inwardly. "It can't be possible that he knows. It can't be!"

"Shall I tell you a little story?" she went on aloud. One of the hands was lost again. "It's a love-story like yours. It's not my own story at all. It's about a princess. You see, she was rather young, the princess, and given to dreaming things—she read novels, I suppose—so she had picked out a certain man, a very well-known man, indeed a great man—I have the best of authority for saying so—and had set in to dream about him, and to read in the newspapers all that he was doing—how she hated some of those papers for their little short notices!—till she waked up to find herself actually in love with him, or with what she believed him to be, for she had never seen him. Once, when it was feared that he had been killed, she nearly died herself. It was—it was—oh, frightful! Then— isn't it a beautiful story?—one day she was told that for very excellent though secret reasons of state, a marriage had been arranged between her and—whom do you think?—her hero! and that he was actually on the way to pay his formal visit and to have the betrothal celebrated. Fancy the princess's frame of mind, will you? She took to sitting in front of her mirror and looking at every feature and expression, wondering if he would think her pretty, if he could—could ever come to care for her. Then—the story isn't quite done yet—then, just after he had arrived, the princess happened by accident to see him, her hero, and—would you believe it?—he was more than her maddest dreams had been, bigger and handsomer and more splendid than she thought any man could be. Ah, she could die—that humble little princess, just for one look of love from him, just for one word that said he—cared! Isn't she a lucky girl? Isn't it too good to

be true? Just think, she's going to marry him, marry him!"

The Englishman sat with his head turned away, and made no sound or movement for a long time. He had dropped the small hand.

"Don't you," she faltered, softly, "don't you like my—story? Aren't you glad to think how happy they're going to be—those two?"

Then, all at once, it came to her what he must be thinking, that he really did not know the game she had been playing with him, that he was in love, had long been in love, with someone whom he had no reason to believe the princess.

"Oh, I must tell him!" she cried to herself; "it's cruel to deceive him so! I must tell him!"

"Poor little princess!" said the Englishman at last, and shook his head, sighing, "poor little dreaming, deluded princess, with her girl's hero that isn't any hero at all!—died for a word from him! died for a look from him!" God knows it would have been kinder and better if he had died before ever he came here, died in one of those fine battles of his before he should wreck her life by tying it to his!"

Adela Luise stared at him with frightened eyes. "What do you—mean?" she whispered, putting out her hands on his arm. "Isn't he all I've been—all she's been thinking him? Isn't he strong and fine and—and—oh, what do you mean?"

He held the two hands against his cheeks, and kissed them. "Dearest," he said through the pink fingers, "no man is all that a girl thinks and dreams and believes; no man is even a shadow of it. And this one—well, he's had a rough life. He's been made hard and bitter and cold. Does it seem disloyal of me to say so? Well, I don't owe him much, and I'm sorry for your princess. Let's hope that she may call back some of the things that he has lost—make him young again. Ah, must we talk forever about dukes and princesses? They're not half so important as we."

The Princess Adela sighed contentedly.

"Never mind them then," said she. "Tell me about you—about me. Tell me some things about me. See what a vain little cat I am! No; tell me one thing first about that duke of yours. Is it true, as they say—" she had a certain wicked light in her eye—"that half the fine things for which he has been rewarded were really planned and done by some young officer on his staff?—I have forgotten the name. It's shocking, if it is true."

The Englishman seemed a trifle annoyed. His color had heightened, and he gave a little embarrassed, deprecatory laugh. "Oh, perhaps," said he, carelessly. "That's nothing unusual, though. Do people talk of it? Probably the officer doesn't mind the duke's having the credit. There's something in the satisfaction of work well done, you know."

"What was the officer's name?" demanded Adela Luise.

The Englishman frowned. "Lord Calthrop," said he, shortly.

The Princess Adela was moved to extreme mirth. Then, after a time, she touched him penitently on the arm, and smiled into his eyes.

"You sha'n't be teased," she cried, with a belated giggle. "But some day, some day away in the future, when I know you much better, I'll tell you what your one fault is. They say all men have it, though," she sighed. "However," patting his arm gently, "I don't in the least mind. I love your faults—I mean your fault. Never mind about officers and wars and Lord Calthrops. Am I really as—as nice as the girl in your locket? You'd tell me if I were not, wouldn't you? Ah, how I love the way you carry your head! Will you promise always to smile at me just like that, and never to frown? I've never been afraid of anything, but I think I should be just the least bit afraid of you if you should scowl at me."

Then for a while she fell silent, smiling off over the gardens to the broad river that glittered under the morning sun and to the pearl and blue hills beyond. She sang a little

quaint song just over her breath, the same that she had sung when she parted the curtains and looked out of the window of her dressing-room into the morning.

The man's eyes were on her, like a caress.

"Will you give me," said he, presently, "the rose that you wear in the bosom of your gown? I should like to be richer."

She dropped her eyes, flushing a little, and touched the rose with her finger-tips, where it lifted and fell on her breast.

"Why," said she, "it is a little thing, a rose; the gardens are full of them; still—" she touched the flower again, smiling—"still I've a perverse fancy for my rose. Will no other do as well?"

"No other," said he, gravely.

"I—I had thought of keeping it," murmured the Princess Adela, "till the man I—love should come to claim it. I have worn it over my heart. Should I give it away recklessly? The heart goes with it," whispered the Princess Adela, with her beautiful face low over the rose.

"It would be a pity," said the Englishman, and he paused to steady his voice, "it would be a pity that the rose should fade."

The Princess Adela sighed. "And the heart grow sad for too long waiting," said she.

"If only the man were here, that you need wait no longer!" he cried.

"Ah," said the Princess Adela, with her hands at her breast, "the man is here—and my foolish heart is leaping under the rose—the man I love!"

The Englishman made a sharp little exclamation of disgust.

"There is someone coming down through the gardens," said he, "from the schloss." The princess rose to her feet beside him. There were two people coming down from the schloss, two men. One of them was past middle age, very stout, and his uncovered head shone bald under a pitiless sky. He had a great square beard and heavy eyebrows, and looked rather fierce.

The other man was taller and younger, perhaps five-and-forty; his face was gaunt and heavily lined, unpleasant about eyes and mouth, very stern, but one saw the remnants of great manly beauty. One said that ten years ago he must have been handsome.

"Adela!" called the elder man, "Adela, where in the devil have you been? I've searched the house for you. Of all the uncertain, exasperating—!" His eyes fell on the young Englishman, and he nodded, carelessly.

"Good morning, Lord Calthrop," said he. Then he turned to the tall man by his side. "Duke, I have the honor of presenting you to my daughter, the Princess Adela Luise."

But the princess had fallen back against the dark trunk of an ilex tree, and was staring with wild eyes at the face of the younger man.

"You—you're not the—duke?" she whispered; "you're not the duke?" and she caught at the tree behind her to save herself.

And the Englishman, very white and trembling a little, only stood in his place, saying over and over, "Great God! the princess, the princess! Great God! the princess!"

Then, after a time, while the old prince frowned out perplexedly under his bushy brows, the Princess Adela caught her breath and lowered her eyes from the face of Lord Calthrop, and stepping forward a pace gave the duke her hand. The slightest spasm of trembling shook her as his lips touched it.

After he had released her hand, she raised it to her bosom and loosed the little red rose that lay there, and turned again to young Calthrop. Her eyes burned into his.

"Will you take this little rose, Lord Calthrop," said she, "in memory of—of a pleasant hour? There is—no other like it," said the Princess Adela.

Then she turned and went up through the gardens to the schloss with the duke and the prince, her father.

QUERY

'T WAS a man and a maid and a little gray cat,
 A-sitting upon a wall;
 And I'll tell you just what the three were at—
 I know, though I didn't see all.
 The man was scratching a puzzled head,
 While the maid, with a troubled air,
 Was playing the catechist, blushing red;
 The cat was washing her hair.

"Don't you know," said the maid, "that 'tis very wrong?"
 "I don't see why," said the man.
 "Don't you know that we've not been acquainted long?"
 "Well, I'm getting on, fast as I can."
 "Why be stubborn?" the catechist asked, in despair.
 The rest was the part that I missed;
 But the man kissed one of the two that were there—
 Do you think 'twas the cat he kissed?

TRUMAN ROBERTS ANDREWS.



TO A MAN ABOUT TO BECOME A SUBURBANITE

EXAMINATION AS TO FITNESS

DID you ever shovel out the route of a clothes-line around the back yard on a Winter wash-day morning?

In a house having a first-class furnace, how would you proceed in keeping warm, supposing that there were two feet of water in the cellar?

In running a lawn-mower, which makes the labor seem the easier, mowing entirely around the lawn, finishing with a tuft of grass in the centre, or mowing forward and back the long way?

Why?

Given a length of garden hose with a leak in it, a bit of string and an old stocking, what would you do?

If the ten o'clock train goes at nine-fifty-seven, you get up at nine-thirty, and sit down to breakfast at nine-forty-two, how far is it to the station?

If there are two feet of water in the cellar, and your rubber boots are one foot and six inches high, how would you get the can of raspberries from the swinging shelf in the front part of the cellar?

Granted that you keep a cat, which is preferable, to leave her in the house at night, and get up at two-thirty to let her out, or to turn her out at bedtime, and get up at four-thirty to let her in?

CHARLES NEWTON HOOD.

MANHATTAN'S GOLDEN FOLD

By Edgar Saltus

S AID a man to us once: "I have a big income. I have a big house. I want to get into society. How can I do it?" "Bite by bite," we replied. He took the tip. Everybody with whom he had so much as a bowing acquaintance he asked, reasked and asked again to dine. Some accepted. Some went so far as to be decently civil in return. Before he moved to another and, we assume, a higher sphere, you could have read his name in the papers every day of your life. That is social success.

Coincidentally a woman of wealth approached us with a cognate query. "Leave a lot of p. p. c.'s and go abroad," we told her. The advice was taken. The lady left cards on everyone she knew not, yet longed to, migrated to Mayfair, consorted with countesses, returned to Manhattan, where, received at first as a distant cousin, ultimately she succeeded in dying in an odor of perfect gentility. What more could the heart desire?

These are magnificent instances. But they occurred in an epoch when New York was closer-fisted and more open-armed than now. To-day, barring the court circles of Vienna and the region known in mythography as the Faubourg Saint-Germain, there is no society in which the line is drawn tighter.

That line is not the clothes-line. In Manhattan you behold coronets on republican cambrics, crowns on democratic heads and débutantes in three-thousand-dollar frocks. These things are very beautiful. So, too, is the taste of the exponents. *C'est le monde où l'on s'en fiche.*

The line is not drawn at birth-marks, either. The latter are essential in Vienna. But nowhere else. To be *hoffähig* there you must have a bushel of quarterings. You need not necessarily have anything more. They suffice. But in their absence you possess nothing which represents, however remotely, a recognizable existence. Your dimensions become microscopic. You are a mimim, a molecule, a mite.

The Faubourg Saint-Germain is assumed to be equally fastidious. The assumption is erroneous. The Faubourg is more exacting. There your quarterings are important, but so, also, is the quality of your intelligence. Descent from a problematic Crusader is a prime prerequisite. But, incidentally, you must be negative. Anything that savors of originality is distinctly common—*rasta*, to use a localism of the realm. *C'est le monde où l'on s'ennuie.*

Manhattan is more liberal. Birth is not a requisite. If it were, the golden fold would be composed of young people still in their teens. Society, as at present organized, had no existence twenty years ago. The men and women who moved and had their social being then have been lost and submerged in the plutocratic flood. Here and there a few ultimate survivors linger on. But their condition is quasi-phantasmal. At an affair that occurred during the Winter, a lady said to us: "Who is that man over there who does not seem to know anyone?" "An old New Yorker," we replied.

Brains are not a requisite, either. In that respect Manhattan has mod-

eled itself after the Faubourg. But, unlike the Faubourg, in and about Manhattan originality counts. It not merely counts, it consists in devising new ways of being dull. In a society at once so polished and so ornate, that is quite as it should be. The result, too, is commendable. Society toils and spins yarns, but it does not read. That is not because it does not know how. It is because it has a fine contempt for literature — yet a contempt which, though fine, is hardly that bred by familiarity.

Though birth is not a requisite, or brains either, genealogy is. The statement being complex, illustrations may clarify it. In London you begin by being smart and end by going into trade. In New York you begin by going into trade and end by being smart. The process is not identical, but the result is the same. With this difference, however. In London the smartness of smart people, whether in trade or out, is due to genealogical memories. In New York smartness is derived from genealogical manufacturers.

And quite naturally. It is related of a foreigner that, being shown over the country seat of an English gentleman, he mused at the pictures of the incumbent's progenitors. "You paint them?" he asked of the house-keeper. The woman replied that she did not how know to paint. "You try," he added, "and you paint better."

On Fifth avenue house-keepers are spared such sarcasm. There are a dozen houses we wot of in which the pictures of the owners' ancestors are works of the highest art. No art, indeed, could be higher. For while the people depicted in the English portraits once lived, however hideously, the people whom the pictures on Fifth avenue represent never lived at all. There is triumphant democracy.

There is surprising magic, too. Endearing examples of similar witchcraft reside in the archives of the local biographical society, which,

during its incubatory incorporation, excited the hilarity of the impolite. It used to be a jest in Europe that we imported our nobility. This institution has done away with that slur. Statistics in hand, it has shown that we produce enough not only for home consumption, but for export purposes to boot. According to the statistics cited, we have already succeeded in raising a regiment of descendants of Alfred the Great and an army of descendants of other and yet greater sovereigns.

After all, why not? Yet precisely as in an occasional newspaper article you read of a prince running a lift here, of another serving as waiter there, of a third who has set up as shoemaker somewhere else, and, all of them, the world forgetting by the world forgot, so does New York society ignore those who are merely royal and nothing else. As one may see, its line is by no means lax.

In spite of an absurd idea to the contrary, that line is not wholly auriferous. Nine months out of twelve the hotels of New York are congested with Croesuses, with whom even the clerks will not condescend to converse. Apart from these hobo millionaires, the town is packed with plutocrats, of whose existence we learn only through hearing that they are dead. Occasionally, as in a recent case, they have to be murdered to attract our attention.

These poor devils come from the pampas, the savannahs, the mines, the lakes, from the Lord knows where else besides. They come allured by the phantasmagoria of the mirage projected from Upper Fifth avenue, drawn by newspaper reports of famous functions, dazzled by the glamour of the golden fold. The sheen of the spangles of glittering gaieties entrances such wives and daughters as they have managed to accumulate. It magnetizes the loot of their hazardous days. Then, too, knowing the country is free, believing that one man is as good as another, certain that they have the coin, convinced that that

talisman is a sesame, urged by the females of their clan, propelled by their own ambitions, excited by such imagination as they possess, in dreams forecast and in leaded type they behold the announcement of their presence among the gala gangs, behind the gilded gates. Whereupon the poor devils conclude that, since the dream is blissful, the realization must be Paradise.

In the thousand and one nights that were less astronomic than our own Paradise was a definite resort. It was very neighborly. It was just overhead. It was a roof-garden. If you were good you were put in a lift and shot there. Since then it has tumbled down. What is worse, there is nothing to take its place. You cannot go to Elysium. It is out of date. There is no use getting a guide-book and looking up Valhalla. It has fallen to pieces. It does not pay to hunt for lodgings in the Orient either. Devachan is a fiction and Nirvana a fraud. The Star of Ormuzd has burned out in the sky. The Lotus of Azure has vanished.

These plaisances were so many synonyms for happiness. In their disappearance it is but natural that the mind of the ordinary man should cast about for a substitute. The mind of the ordinary man is an engaging collection of zeros. An ordinary woman has the mind of a hen. The latter appreciation is not our own. It was expressed by Confucius, who considerably added that an extraordinary woman has the mind of two hens.

To a conjunction of intelligences of this order society appeals as Paradise did in nights less astronomic. But because society appeals to them, it by no means follows that they appeal to society. On the contrary. Along Fifth avenue they have the substance of shadows on glass. There the tramp millionaires, whom we have been considering, discover, very greatly to their own amazement, and without any assistance whatever from idealistic philosophy, that, in spite of their coin,

they do not exist; that they are not even the perceptions of a perceiver. Then it is quite one to them whether they are murdered or not. Dreams are true while they last. The dreams of these poor devils do not linger long after they have crossed the ferry.

Yet, what could be more logical? There are people who compose cantatas. They have the gift for that sort of thing. There are others who can tell what won't happen to you six months hence. They have the faculty for such clairvoyance. There are women who, on not a dollar more than twenty-four thousand a year, manage to look like angels. Only, of course, much better dressed. It is an art of theirs. There are novelists whose produce sells by the ton. They have a charm that appeals to chambermaids.

It is the same way with local society. To belong to it birth is not necessary. It is not, as vagrant plutocrats fancy, a question of bank-accounts. Brains have nothing to do with it, breeding less. It is wholly and solely a matter of temperament.

In Paris it is a commonplace that a man is born an Academician as he is born a prelate or a bore. He may, if it pleases him, abuse the Academy continuously, and be elected none the less; but three hundred masterpieces, recognized as such by the genuflections of an adoring universe, and even by the Academy itself, will not aid him to open its doors unless he be predestined.

Society is quite like the Academy. If destiny has given you the temperament, it is a mere detail who and what you are. Your mother may have been a cook and your grandfather a crook—you will get there. But if you lack the temperament, then though you descend from Charlemagne, though you have the manners of a Chesterfield, the genius of Cæsar and the coin of Cræsus, you might as well try your hand at cantatas, at clairvoyance, at seraphizing on small sums, at charming chambermaids with stupidities, as to attempt to get in. Yet, if, through accident, attraction or

affiliation you should do so, you will not remain. It will not be because you are urged to go. It will be because you do not care to stop. The temperament will be lacking.

Given the temperament and, in an atmosphere of orris, you will discover women talking about nothing at all to men who have devoted their lives to the subject. In sittings limited in spaciousness, but unlimited in splendor, you will encounter the prettiest girls in the world; heiresses of the first water, the deliciousness of ruedelapaixian confections, the aroma of Manhattan mingling with the accents of Mayfair.

You will observe, too, the same *piaffe* as in Paris; the same veneer that Vienna displays. You will miss, though, the grace and seduction of manner, the desire, coupled with the design to please, which is noticeable there. But then, as you will be necessarily aware, the local young person has been so cracked up that she fancies herself top of the heap, dispensed as such from any effort.

In health, coloring, spirits and general *je m'en fichisme* she is, indeed, a little dear, and the fact that she has not been schooled to charm has, as all things else have, an explanation. In European circles women have nothing to do but that, and they do it to perfection. They put flowers in your heart, to which years after you may turn and find fresh and unfaded still. With legerdemain of that kind the breeziness of our climate interferes. Girls here have other allurements, tricks worth two of that. They are disquietingly candid and delectably serene. Moreover, like all *objets de luxe*, they are a pleasure to behold. It is their conversation that is less enticing. On the subject of that which it is colloquial to term Who's What, and Why, the immaturest among them could give a lexicographer points. But that aria at an end, the rest of their *répertoire* detains only those who have the temperament to withstand it.

Aristocracy, an old chemist an-

nounced, should be composed of equal parts of beauty and of brains. In the pharmacy of our local plutocracy brains are put up homeopathically. The entertainments of the gilded gang provide you with everything that eye and stomach can decently require. There is there the beauty and the bowl. *Il y a, comme aux beaux jours d'antan, des franchises repues et des vastes lip-pées.* Yet always by way of interlude are there illustrations in the gymnastics of yawning.

Save among the decrepit and the kids, there is rarely the rumor of a flirtation. Of scandal, this year, there has been barely a breath. In Europe, *autre guitare*. But over there women, being sure of their position, do not bother themselves with it, while here they are too busy with what they call their status to go poaching on one another's preserves. The tone is, therefore, quite edifying, and very dull. It resembles that of a club of millionaires in which few of the members think and none have emotions.

This is not right. These people should do nothing but sin and sparkle. They should be forced to amuse us, if only in return for the attention with which they are gratified by the country at large. Time was when they did. It is not so long ago that they treated the world to a series of splendid wickednesses, to stunning treacheries, to superb betrayals, and therewith to an arrogance so medieval that in certain cases occurring in our private practice we saw mortification morbus set in and death ensue. It was like living in a novel to move among these people, and not a three-volume English affair either, nor yet in the dollar and fifty cents' worth of truck which our local authors serve, but a novel such as d'Annunzio could write and the authorities would seize.

For never, perhaps, except in the Rome of the Cæsars, have there been gathered together in one city a set so rich, so idle, so profoundly uninterested in anything save themselves. No wonder there are proletarians. There is no debt as faithfully acquitted

as contempt, and the disdain of these delightful people for the outer world, for the world that is outside of Burke and their own Libro d'Oro is a point for the future psychologist, a nut, too,

for those wastrels to crack who emerge and emigrate from the Lord knows where, with the dream, absurd in its pathos, of being welcomed in the golden fold.



APPLE BLOSSOMS

THE trees, whose flowering buds
Make life a happier thing,
Are shining a perfumed light—
Candelabra of the Spring.

ELIZABETH WARDWELL WURTS.



KITCHEN CHAT

SODA—That was quite a disappointment for our friend Soap.

STARCH—How so?

SODA—Ever since the new kitchen girl came he has been laid on the shelf. He used to be flirting with the Sink Brush all the time.

JOHNNY STEAK—Ah, there, sweetness!

MISS LOAF SUGAR—Say, young man, you're too fresh. If you speak to me again I'll call my friend, Mr. Salt, and he'll fix you.

"I HAVE carved my own way," said the Carving Knife to the Table Knife.

"I may be a little dull," said the latter, "but it has seemed to me that you are much like some politicians. It has taken a steel now and then to put you where you wanted to be."

HAM—Hello, there, Egg! where have you been since last Summer?

EGG—Oh, my doctor said if I wanted to stand it until Spring I'd have to have a colder climate, so I've been in cold storage. But where have you been?

HAM—Well, my doctor advised me to tone up, so I took a salt bath every day for a long time, and I felt so much better that I had my regular smoke every day. Lately, though, the cook has been rather sharp with me, and I feel quite cut up over it.

CORK—What a sad accident it was that happened to our friend Bottle!

SCREW—What was it? I have not heard.

CORK—Why, he fell from the back porch and broke his neck.

"COME over into my cellar," said the Table Salt to the Rock Salt, "if you want to see something fine."

A. H. WRIGHT.

THE MAN WHO WISHED

By Fred Wright, Jr.

THERE was once a man who wished.

Everything he saw—another man's money, another man's luck, another man's love—he wanted.

The more he sat and wished the poorer he grew, till out of his rags and hunger he cried, "Others have their desire. Give me mine."

And so a wish was granted him.

Once in his life he could desire and have. But only once.

At that the man rose up and walked forth, rejoicing—till he fell a-thinking what his wish should be. Then his choice troubled him, for he had but one wish.

A rich man's carriage splashed him in passing by. He was angry, and almost wished the rich man evil. But he remembered in time that it would consume his gift, and he have no gain.

He passed a cook-shop, and was so faint he nearly wished for what he saw; till he remembered hunger would come again with night, and his wish be gone.

The wind pierced his rags, so that he almost desired a cloak; but he restrained himself, for cloaks wear threadbare.

Then he laughed at his foolishness, and was about to wish for gold to buy both food and cloak. But being a poor man and alone, the world would have said that he stole it, and would have taken it from him.

So, whereas before he had sat down and idly wished for things around him, he now pressed on, not daring to desire what he saw.

Still, knowing he could end them if he chose, he bore his cold and hunger, till, coming to a town, he hired himself out to work for dinner and a cloak. Then he went on warm and fed, his precious wish still whole.

Thus he journeyed, till, in a place he came to, there was war. At first he feared; yet remembering he had but to wish in order to win, he had courage, took the weaker side, and fighting hard, he won. And he had his wish still with him.

When peace came he loved a maid who did not love him in return. He thought to make her love him by his gift, but now he had pride in trusting to himself; so, remembering her love might fade in after years, and his power to wish it back again be gone, he set his mind to woo her for himself.

Soon she loved him, and they were wed. And still he had his wish.

Thus, made strong by his secret gift, and keeping it ever for a future day, he worked by his own hand, grew great and famous, and all things he had vainly sat and wished for were his by striving.

At last, full of years and full of honor, he lay dying. And he remembered he had still his wish.

They tempted him to use it now, to ask for longer life.

But he was wise even to the end.

"Work is the gift," he said; "I have had all by it. Now I will use my wish. I wish to die."

And it was granted him.



MARRIAGE often adds a syllable to life, making connubial bliss connubial blister.

THE DAY OF THE WEDDING

By Frank Lee Benedict

THE first thing to do—when her fingers could hold a pen—was to answer the letter. She laid her reply in her writing-desk, since it could not begin its journey until evening. In the desk was a letter she had written the night before. The rejection of George Henderson had been a pain to her sensitive, sympathetic nature; now in her great and sudden happiness she felt increased regret. She would read the reply again before sending it; perhaps her refusal might be put in kinder words.

She had only four days in which to make her preparations, including the purchase of her wedding-gown—on the fourth she began her journey. The weather was pleasant; she met agreeable people on the train and the sleeping-coach porter singled her out for special attentions.

The third day dawned; before noon she would be in Denver—this was Constance's first waking thought. But about nine o'clock the train stopped at a junction. The attentive porter informed Miss Marbury that there would be a delay of over two hours, owing to an accident to a freight train a short time before.

With her customary decision, Constance resolved to utilize the opportunity. The porter secured her a room in a hotel close to the station, and carried there the valise she had with her in the train. She was able to make her toilette without hurry, and the result proved successful enough to render her prettier than ever, as she blushed at her smiling reflection in the mirror. She had chosen for her wedding-dress a gown

that would serve for the journey to San Francisco, but so dainty and stylish that she knew it would satisfy Royce's fastidious taste.

As she seated herself in the car an express from Denver steamed into the station. Constance looked out of her window full into the face of George Henderson. Before she could recover from her astonishment he entered the coach, his face bright with surprised pleasure.

He hurried toward her and grasped her hand, exclaiming: "Constance—Miss Marbury! I can hardly believe my eyes."

"Nor I mine," she answered, so confused by the meeting at such a time that she hardly knew what she said. "I—I supposed you were in the East—I did not dream——"

Her sentence remained unended, for her embarrassment increased. She grew pale, then blushed violently under his eager gaze. He misinterpreted her agitation, and a great hope sprang up in his heart, all the brighter from the anxiety and fear he had endured since writing the letter to which he had received no answer.

"I was called unexpectedly into this part of the world about a week ago," he said, that masterful will of his enabling him to retain an outward appearance of calmness even in the excitement that shook his very soul. "I have been so troubled by your silence—but I was sure a letter from you was following me about."

Constance sank back in her seat, filled with dismay. She had rewritten her letter, had told him that she was going to be married; but how

could she repeat that here? Yet—she must. And he looked so glad to see her; it was so dreadful to overwhelm him by the blunt announcement of the truth!

And he had gained sufficient possession of his whirling thoughts to wonder over this meeting. Then, quickly, he accounted for it in his mind—some advantageous situation in a school had been offered to her, and she had accepted it. But how could that be if she meant to yield to his persuasions and marry him? It was like her, though—always so determined in her independence. Perhaps she meant to insist on delay, a long engagement—he would soon convince her of the folly of such idle scruples. He had known that she did not love him, though with the customary fatuity of men he had felt confident that he could teach her to, if only she would become his wife. Now her confusion, her quick changes of color, brought the conviction that, after all, she did care.

Then, before Constance had found breath to speak again, he was saying:

“But you have not told me how you happen to be here—or where you are going.”

“To Denver,” she began; “I—am going to——”

She could add nothing more, for there was a shout of departure.

Henderson spoke rapidly: “I am forced to go on, but I shall be in Denver in the course of the day; I shall come for the answer to my letter.”

He was rushed away by the porter as he finished the sentence, and the train sped on. Constance’s first thought was of how much he would have been spared if she had not delayed sending her answer to his letter—in the vain hope that she could tell the truth more kindly. Now he would come, to find her married! There was no way to soften the blow. At least, she had told him over and over again that she could never marry him. Unfortunately, that previous Summer when they had met, she and

Royce Manning had been indulging in one of the misunderstandings common in long engagements. She had sent back his ring in response to an angry letter. The quarrel was soon made up, but not till Mr. Henderson had gone, while she still hesitated to inform him of her engagement, as there seemed no hope that she and Royce would be able to marry for a long while to come.

Notwithstanding her sympathy for George Henderson, his image speedily faded from her mind. To pass the time she took Royce’s letter from her pocket and began to read it. She knew it by heart, and could turn at once to any passage she wished. He had at last received his promotion—he was a captain in the army engineer corps. He could not obtain a furlough—he begged her to come to Denver that they might be married at once.

“And you will,” he wrote. “I measure your love by my own, and I know that you will not allow any conventional custom to stand between us and happiness. In ten days I must start for California. We shall perhaps be kept there a year—you and I, Constance, for you will not let me go alone!”

Then followed two full pages of passionate persuasions, before he could settle down to details and explanations.

“I am ordered off to-morrow on a surveying expedition into the mountains—shall be gone four or five days. I cannot have the comfort of a telegram; I must wait all that time—oh, an ordinary life would not look so long! But your letter will repay me—it will say that you are coming. Three days for your preparations, then your journey; the third morning will bring you here. I shall meet you at the station; we shall drive to the clergyman’s house and be married.”

Constance read the succeeding pages with a happy smile, their persuasive eloquence seeming more beautiful than ever. Then, with that sensation of living in a dream still stronger upon

her, she watched the hurried panorama flit past the coach windows, glancing now and again at her watch—the sight of those circling hands somehow gave her a sense of reality that steadied her.

Only three-quarters of an hour left—half an hour—then an interminable quarter. At last came the whistle's shriek and the call—Denver! The train stopped, the passengers descended.

Royce was not in sight—he would appear in a moment. As Constance neared the waiting-room, she noticed a knot of persons making their way out—evidently bound for a train ready to start. She drew back and looked at the group, plainly a wedding-party. The ladies were gaily dressed under their wraps; the men had flowers in their button-holes.

The bride passed her, leaning on the arm of a gentleman. He was not the bridegroom—probably the best man. He was saying gaily: "I feel as if I had stolen you and were running away with you! I shall put you comfortably into your state-room while that husband of yours attends to his telegrams."

The little bride was very pretty, and so childish-looking—not yet eighteen, surely. There was still another point of interest; her costume was like Constance's—peacock blue, with mantle and hat to match.

The party passed on, and Constance entered the station. Her heart gave one bound, then fairly stopped beating—she saw Royce. He was coming from an inner room—the one they had reached was empty. Royce did not see her; he looked pale and worn. He was hurrying out to the train—troubled, she knew, by the fact of being late. With an inarticulate cry of happiness, Constance ran forward, calling:

"Royce! Here I am, Royce!"

He stopped and stared at her, as a man might stare at a ghost—even as he might stare at the ghost of one who had done him a deadly wrong and had died unforgiven.

"Royce!" she called again, "Royce!"

He took a few steps forward, still staring at her with that dreadful expression. She stood motionless, while every drop of blood in her veins seemed turning to ice. With an effort, as if breaking fetters of iron, Constance sprang forward, her arms extended.

"Royce, Royce! Are you startled? Didn't you get my letter—and the telegram?"

"Letter?" he repeated. "Oh, yes, I got your letter—here it is! I meant to read it once more—just to give me strength——"

She snatched the letter as he took it out of his pocket, and glanced at the first page. It was the one she had written to George Henderson.

Did Royce speak the words, or did her memory prompt them? She could not tell—but these words from the page she had not turned rang in her ears: "This is farewell. Perhaps I ought to have told you sooner—I am going to be married."

In her haste she had not put Henderson's name at the beginning. There was nothing that might not apply to Royce—it appeared a refusal to go to him, an abrupt announcement that she had deserted him for another.

Before she could find any words in the dizziness and faintness that beset her faculties, she heard Royce say:

"What are you doing here? What did you come for?"

Then she heard her own voice, far off, unfamiliar:

"I came to meet you! That was the letter I wrote Mr. Henderson."

"My God!" he groaned; then both stood dumb.

Constance was first to find voice, crying, piteously:

"Royce, Royce! You can't be angry—I have come—it was only a blunder! See, I have my wedding-gown on! You aren't angry now, Royce?"

He put up his hands, struggling to speak, as a paralytic might.

"I was married two hours ago!"

he gasped. "I went mad when your letter came—I swore you should hear within a week that I was married."

Voices from outside called, excitedly:

"Manning! Royce! The train is waiting!"

"Constance!" he moaned. "What can we do?"

Again she heard her own voice, cold, distinct, like the voice of a stranger:

"Nothing—nothing!"

Then once more the summons from without:

"Manning! Hurry up!"

She laid her hands on his shoulders, and looked into his eyes, as a dying woman might look at one beloved.

"Good-bye!" she said. "Your wife is waiting."

As she turned away, a bevy of young men and women rushed in, and Manning was hurried off. A few seconds later the whistle blew, and the train moved out of the station.

Constance found herself seated on a bench; in her hand she still grasped the letter. She was not dying, she thought, wonderingly, just stony and incapable of movement, as if stricken by catalepsy. It seemed ages before the entrance of several persons brought her back to ordinary life. Somebody gave her a glass of water; she managed to drink it. After a little she could speak.

Yes—an attack of faintness. Yes, thanks—she wanted to go to a hotel. Then came to her the name of the house Royce had designated. Oh, a carriage? Yes—thanks again.

All these replies were uttered as they might have been by a stone image endowed with speech through some marvelous mechanical process. She felt nothing—literally nothing. She wondered stupidly if she had died suddenly, and whether those about knew she was dead.

Then soon she was driving through the sunshiny streets; at last she was in the hotel, talking with the landlady—at least hearing her talk.

"Why, the house is full to the gar-

ret; so are all the other hotels—Ear-nest Endeavor folks or something. Luckily, I've two rooms a gentleman has just vacated. He was married this morning. They ain't in order yet—but that won't take long. Go up at once and lie down. Of course you can. Come right along! Traveling always makes me feel faint, too!"

The landlady was full of sympathy for the pale, pretty creature. And at this moment an expressman appeared with three great trunks for her. Naturally, a young lady so elegant, with so much luggage, deserved every attention.

"Here we are!" she said, as they reached a door near the head of the stair-case. "This is the sitting-room. Things don't look so bad as they might. The lieutenant—he's captain now, Captain Manning—was the most orderly gentleman and the nicest! Married the prettiest girl—rich, too. She was just wild over him. She and several other ladies were up in the mountains with the engineers, camping out."

The woman talked on, lengthening her tale by all manner of irrelevant remarks, and Constance listened in spite of herself.

"The wedding was a wonderful surprise to everybody. I knew the child was in love with the handsome fellow—any girl might have been. I've known Lina Travers ever since she was a baby; I used to be her aunt's house-keeper; the two never got on very well together."

She paused for breath, and something she could not resist forced Constance to say, inquiringly:

"Yes—yes?"

"Well," the landlady continued, while she set chairs in their places and dusted them with her apron, "I've eyes in my head and I generally keep them open! I believe the lieutenant was engaged; he used to get lots of letters, all directed in the same pretty hand. He found one when he got back last Tuesday, and he raved about up here all night like

a lunatic. I believe the girl had jilted him—girls are dreadful! And the next day he asked Lina to marry him—two days' notice. He had to start this morning. It was lucky Lina had just got a lot of lovely dresses from Paris. I saw them married—he looked like death, poor fellow!”

Constance rose unconsciously from her chair, took a few aimless steps and sat down again.

“You look white enough yourself—traveling always serves me just so! I'll send you up a cup of tea. I'd lie down if I was you.”

When the landlady had gone, Constance walked about examining the room—Royce's room! In the wastebasket were piles of torn papers; on the hearth the blackened remnants of those that had been burned. She picked up a scrap. Two or three words were left unscorched—she recognized her own writing. Royce had burned her letters the night before his wedding.

She began her walk again. She noticed various discarded trifles on the mantel and tables. There was an old pearl-handled pen-knife that she remembered, an agate pen-holder that she had given him, an odd sleeve-link—she recollected the day she gave him the pair. She laid all the articles carefully together, wondering, in a dazed fashion, why she did it.

Presently she dragged herself into the bedchamber. On a chair lay a pile of cast-off clothes. Constance recognized a light gray suit that Royce had worn when he came to visit her for a few days during the past Summer.

The bed had not been disturbed. He had spent the night awake—the night

before his wedding! For he was married—Royce was married!

A knock at the door—a servant with the tea-tray. Yes; the trunks could wait till the rooms were put in order. But please let her rest for a while! Again she was alone with her misery.

She lay down on the bed, then got up again; she walked back and forth, up and down, until she was forced to rest from sheer physical exhaustion, but there was no repose for her tired brain.

Royce was married—gone—life had ended! But the material part of existence, the mere living, goes on long after life is over. What Constance was bearing, the torture of life in death, has been borne by countless men and women, will be borne by countless men and women yet to come.

The day wore on. She could not tell whether she slept at all, but at times a lethargy dulled her senses so that she could lie still. The rooms had been set in order; her trunks were there; she had opened them and had changed her dress—when? But it did not matter! The kindly landlady had twice visited her; so many things had happened; she had lived so long, so long since daylight! And it was the same day still—Royce's wedding-day.

Another knock at the door—this time a servant with a card. George Henderson! She had forgotten him and his promised visit. She went down-stairs into a reception-room; he hurried forward to meet her.

“And my letter?” were his first words. “I have come for the answer.”

“Not yet. By-and-bye—perhaps.”



MRS. KNOWIT—You must not expect that marriage will give you complete happiness.

MRS. WABASH NEUWED—True; there is divorce.

DRIFTS

WITH drifts of bloom on the hills,
 And drifts of clouds and snow,
 And Autumn leaves, and the rills'
 And oceans' ceaseless flow,

Old earth was swung into space
 In the whirl of wind and star;
 The sunlight drifts o'er her face,
 And the moonlight follows afar.

It was thus your young love came,
 And passed through my heart on its way;
 But as flame is drawn after flame,
 My soul after yours must stray

And ever amid the great wheel
 Of the stars and the winds and the years,
 Together our spirits shall steal
 Through the drifts of smiles and tears.

THOMAS WALSH.



WHAT A WOMAN'S SMILE WILL BUY

LOVE, said the youth.
 Position, said the shrewd observer.
 Heaven, said the poet.
 A Spring bonnet, said the husband.
 Dross, said the cynic.
 Champagne, said the chappie.
 Compliments, said the social leader.
 Fame, said the theatrical manager.
 Luck, said the gambler.
 Men's souls, said the extremist.
Anything I want, said the woman herself.

LOUIS J. STELLMANN.



"HA! ha!" laughed Funnycus; "a joke!"
 "Ha! ha!" laughed his audience; "what is it?"
 "Ha! ha! a joke!"

ICELANDIC LYRICS

By Bliss Carman

THREE things there be in the world, Yvonne;
And what do you guess they mean?
The stable land, the heaving sea,
And the tide that hangs between.

Three things there be in this life, Yvonne;
And what do you guess they mean?
Your sun-warm soul, my wind-swept soul,
And a current that draws between.

II

How unutterably lonely
Is the vast gray round of sea,
Till the yellow flower of heaven
Breaks and blossoms and gets free,
Lighting up the lilac spaces
With her golden density!
Hope of sailors and of lovers
Is the lantern of the sea.

Not the moon it was that lighted
One gray waste of heart I know,
Warmed with lovelight, touched with magic,
And made molten and aglow,
When your beauty flowered above it
From a twilight soft and slow.
Dearest face that still must lantern
Where your lover still must go!

III

I saw you in the gloaming, love,
When all the fleets were homing, love,
And under the large level moon the long gray seas were combing, love.

I saw you tall and splendid, love,
And all my griefs were ended, love,
When on me, as I put to land, your seaward eyes were bended, love.

The little boats were stranded, love,
And all their rich bales landed, love,
But all my wealth awaited me, low-voiced and gentle-handed, love.

THE SMART SET

IV

My love said, "What is the sea?"
 I said, "The unmeasured sea
 Is my heart, sweetheart,
 That is stormy or still
 With its great wild will,
 Glorifying, stainless and free,
 Or sad with a sorrow beyond man's speech to impart,
 But forever calling to thee,
 Heart of my heart."

My love said, "What is the tide?"
 I said, "The unshackled tide
 Is my love, sweetheart,
 The draft and sweep
 Of the restless deep,
 Made clean as the stars and wide,
 That forever must yearn to the land above and apart,
 Till the day when she sinks to his side,
 Heart of my heart."

My love said, "What is the land?"
 I said, "The Summer land
 Is thy face, sweetheart,
 Dreamy and warm and glad,
 In a benediction clad,
 With sunshine sweetened and tanned;
 And there is the set of the tide, the end and the start,
 The sea's despair and demand,
 Heart of my heart!"

V

Look, where the northern streamers wave and fold,
 Bluish and green and gold,

At the far corner of the quiet land,
 Moved by an unseen hand!

Someone has drawn the curtains of the night,
 And taken away the light.

It is so still I cannot hear a sound,
 Except the mighty bound

Your little heart makes beating in your side,
 And the first sob of tide,

When the sea turns from ebb far down the shore
 To his old task once more.

O surging, stifling heart, have all your will,
 In the blue night and still!

Love till the Hand folds up the firmament,
 And the last stars are spent!

THE WIFE OF SHIMADZU

By Onoto Watanna

THE Japanese consul smiled at the dyspeptic pathos manifest in the countenance of the little figure that had presented itself within his inner office. On the appealing features there were traced unmistakable lines of peculiar pain. Occasionally their momentary rigidity was disturbed by acute spasms.

"Why, Narabara, what has put you to these honorable torments?" he asked.

The sufferer laid one hand on his little throbbing abdomen. "Excellency," he moaned, "these very much august damn cooking too august for my insignificant stomach. It gives me too many honorable pains." This with a grimace of the utmost anguish.

The consul had been rather long in the land of the august Americans—long enough to catch with grave Oriental diligence something of their humor. That, perhaps, was the reason he laughed, although the faces of his assistants, who had been a shorter time in the country, remained impassive and unamused at the sorrows of Narabara. Nothing of the consul's humor seemed to reach Narabara. Silently he awaited its conclusion. It was a common thing among these barbarians, and the consul—out of politeness, doubtless—did as they all did; for Narabara recalled that, whenever he addressed an American on the subject, straightway that honorable savage began to laugh.

Finally the amusement of the consul spent itself.

"I thought," he said, "that the honorable Narabara came to the land of the laughs to become one of the na-

tives. I thought he desired to become an American. Did he not tell me that many Irish, themselves foreigners, came here and straightway became Americans, and that he, too, a foreigner, was desirous of doing that also? Did he not ask me to find for him a typically American place of abode, where he might learn to eat of the dishes of this country, and did I not send him thither?"

"Godder dam!" responded Narabara, who failed to appreciate the consul's humor.

"Come, tell me how you fared," said the consul, pushing forward a chair hospitably and seating himself.

"Ah, excellency," said Narabara, sadly, "I went bravely to the honorable task. In the morning I arose and assassinated my unworthy stomach with a breakfast of a suspicious mush and the most honorable pig fried and mixed with hen egg. My inwards did make honorable rebellion at the tainting gnaw of pig flesh, but I tried to bear it. Then they brought suspicious cakes fried in grease over the living fire and things called biscuit, with all of which I struggled. Once they had honorable rice, but not cooked after our own divine manner; on the contrary, disfigured with raisins! In spite of my sufferings I persevered until their august Sunday, when they brought to the table a great, half-raw, malodorous flesh named 'roast beef.' It was a nightmare of Yeddo! Sunday after Sunday came, and with it this stomach-revolting piece of flesh, which I was forced to eat, out of honorable politeness to the house. My soul longs and my stomach hun-

gers for the *shiruko*, *sushi* and the *kamaboko* of my fathers. My honorable insides are beset with the devils of pain. I come now to you as the representative of my people and the worthy friend of my father."

He doubled forward in his chair with an appealing bow.

The consul considered a moment.

"You are in sore straits," he said.

"Direly afflicted," answered Narabara.

"What can I do for you?"

Narabara sighed.

"Possibly," he said, "there may be in this city of raw beef some of our countrymen, who, having tried the honorable dishes of these barbarians—"

"Many, many such," said the consul, thoughtfully.

"Perhaps there are those who have given up the foolish fight and have made a place where we honorable exiles might partake of *charvan*, the *namasu* and the *konomono*. Is there no such Japanese restaurant here?"

The consul turned to a type-written list on the wall.

"There is a Japanese restaurant at No. 10A West Forty-third street, kept by the worthy Shimadzu, where all those things are served," he told Narabara. "I myself have eaten there. Go, then, to-night, to the house of Shimadzu."

That night found Narabara seated in a corner of the restaurant of Shimadzu. The pains of his stomach seemed to have taken wings, for his face beamed blissfully.

Without, the house had presented every aspect of the conventional high-steepled residence of the type surrounding it. There was nothing, beyond the bamboo hangings at the windows, to differentiate it from its fellows, and these might pass in outside speculation as a manifestation of the taste of that species of millionaire prone to building European houses meant to be set in grounds on the crowded plot of a New York side street. There was not even a sign upon the house-front to denote its character. It was

known only to the initiated and the élite of Manhattan Japanese society. Within, however, everything was Japanese.

When Narabara had ascended the little flight of stairs leading up from the street and had pushed open the unlatched door, he had come as near to gaping about as the polite Japanese may come. The partitions that had once separated the rooms of the residence had been removed, to make of the entire floor one immense chamber. Instead of bare, modern walls, sliding *shoji* (paper screens) marked the limits of the apartment. The whole interior was planned as the principal apartment of a Japanese house. Set against the walls were large jars and vases containing fresh flowers and excellent imitation sprays of cherry and plum-blossoms. Attendants in native costume hurried hither and thither.

Narabara stood for a moment transfixed. Then he sighed—a long-drawn breath it was, that of a traveler returning home. Next he observed the bowing figure before him.

"Welcome," said the figure, sonorously, "to the augustly insignificant and unworthy house of Shimadzu, most honorably condescending and august Narabara."

With a slight inclination of the head Narabara acknowledged the other's salute.

"You were expected," continued the figure; "my master, Shimadzu, bade me escort you to an upper chamber, where your garment is in waiting."

After Narabara had changed his cumbersome American clothes for the soft, silken *hakama* which the attendant servilely offered, he was led to the principal apartment below. He was met at the door by the smiling consul, who led him to a table in a shaded corner of the room, introducing him to a number of men and women.

"Ladies and gentlemen," cried the consul, "let me present to you Narabara Shawtaro, an artist, who, after a gallant struggle with the dishes of his adopted land, has come again to his own."

Narabara, after the buzz of salutations had died down, dared to glance stealthily under his eyes at these honorable ladies who were thus eating in public. He discovered, to his surprise, that while all the men at the table were Japanese, but one of the women bore even the slightest resemblance to his countrywomen, and even she had the rosy coloring of the West. Then he remembered that the consul had married an American. He glanced again at the girl beside him, and felt a strange glow of satisfaction in assuring himself that, despite her complexion, she was undoubtedly Japanese. At the other tables he saw that the diners were all Japanese, and he finally came to the conclusion that this little collection of friends at this particular table was a special party given by the consul.

"So you don't like American cooking?" said a voice beside him, and Narabara woke from his dream of delight.

Narabara soon found himself discussing *charvan* and American cooking with his companion. She spoke of Japanese cooking as one an enthusiast on things Japanese and a dweller in Nippon. When he was thoroughly at his ease, she allowed him to see that she was familiar with his flower paintings.

"Yours is not an ordinary brush. You do not copy nature as a photographer, but your brush seems to catch rather at the essence of the flower and depict its poetic significance," she told him.

Had she expressed this sentiment in English, Narabara would have muttered his polite, "Certainly, certainly," signifying that he did not understand; but she spoke in Japanese. The artist glowed. When the meal was over Narabara thought her the most intelligent woman he had ever met. He had just begun to think her the most beautiful Japanese woman he had ever seen, when she said:

"Perhaps you have puzzled over my nationality. I am only half Japanese. My mother was of Nippon and my father in the English consular service."

After a moment she added, as if to relieve the somewhat embarrassing silence:

"I am sure you are going to like this place. I often come here myself, not only because of the food, but because of other things. Sometimes they have—ah, now you shall see for yourself."

At a sign from Shimadzu the remnants of the feast—for, in spite of the Japanese prevalence of fish in all forms, it had been designed as a banquet—were swept away. The lights, save a few in the rear of the room, were extinguished, leaving the apartment in partial gloom. The chatter and laughter of the guests died away as these apparent preparations for something to come were made. Then, into the softened darkness, there came—pulsating, vibrating—the weird drone and squeak of the *samisen* rising and mingling in a movement that suggested the passing away, the gliding of all things. A *shoji* in the rear, somewhat distant from the diners, slid back, disclosing a Japanese expanse of land and water, with a mountain rising in the background, the regretful rays of a dying sun bathing it in a golden light. The scene remained but a moment, and then vanished to make room for another as strangely beautiful. When the lights came again, Narabara found his companion sitting with her hands to her eyes.

"I thought I was in the city of my birth," she said.

From that night forth Narabara was to be found every evening at the house of Shimadzu. Sometimes he came alone, often with friends; but he always sat in the same place and the identical corner where he had met the Eurasian. His constant occupation of the place attracted no notice, for each of the patrons of Shimadzu had his own seat and his own table, where he was regularly to be found. And no one thought of taking the place or the table of an old patron. So the artist's spot came to be known as "Narabara's corner."

Narabara had been a regular at-

tendant at the house of Shimadzu for some months when, one evening, on ladies' night, he entered the place with the young half-barbarian, whose name, she had told him, was Otama Wallace. They went straightway to his accustomed corner. Narabara wanted to be alone with her that evening. Perhaps the girl guessed what was in his mind, and she could not blame him for taking advantage of her mood in bringing her where the Japanese atmosphere affected her always so deeply.

Their meal was begun in a silence that was eloquent. Narabara had hardly found his voice when Shimadzu was seen coming toward them. He smiled blandly on them.

"Excellency," he said, "pardon this unworthy forwardness of an insignificant man, but who is yet happy."

"Yes?" they smiled, appreciatively.

Shimadzu, encouraged, continued:

"I am happy as a nightingale, and blessed am I in my insignificance."

The girl made answer:

"O Shimadzu, maker of the finest *kamaboko*, tell us the cause of thy honorable joy."

"It is," said Shimadzu, "because I am about to make an honorable alliance with Madame Kiku, who at present resides in San Francisco. She will come soon to preside over my insignificant establishment in an august manner."

When he had received their congratulations he went from table to table, announcing his projected marriage with a beaming face. After he was gone, Narabara looked shyly at the half-foreign face of his friend. He could see, from her shining eyes and flushed cheeks, that the announcement of Shimadzu had pleased and excited her. She had all a woman's interest in a romance.

"The best part of your nature," said Narabara, "is Japanese."

"It is so," she answered; "the best part of me is Japanese; but—" she hesitated a moment—"still I am *not* Japanese."

"I love you," said Narabara, his

courage taking sudden fire; "if you will marry me you will be wholly Japanese."

The girl looked at him reflectively.

"Just now," he continued, with a pleading quality in his voice, "you said the better part of you was Japanese. Why not marry me, then? I am not uncivilized, though I cannot eat American dishes. Our marriage shall be the union of art with—with—" he glanced at her brilliant coloring—"with the spirit of poetry."

"Oh, Narabara!" she cried, leaning toward him impulsively, "you don't know what you are asking. It is true that I am more Japanese than anything else, though I have lived the best part of my life here; but, after all, I am only a half-caste. In Japan I would be scorned; even here I am regarded as a curiosity."

"But you have not answered me," said Narabara. "You do not refuse me?"

"No, I do not. Ask me in a month's time. I cannot answer you to-night, for I feel that, while my better part is Japanese, I must do my Saxon half justice. To-night—this place—you—Japan herself is on my nerves. Ask me in a month, when I can see things more clearly."

Long after the girl had gone to her home in a carriage, Narabara sat in his accustomed corner brooding over coming events, with the aid of *sake* and the weird music of the place.

The time passed rapidly for Narabara. He had been much engaged with his art work, for Narabara had become the fad in certain circles, and many orders had come to him. A number of times he had attempted to see Miss Wallace, but without success. He had penetrated as far as the reception-room of the thoroughly Saxon apartment-house of his mistress. She would dine with him at the house of Shimadzu at the end of the period she had mentioned, and would then come to a decision, was the word brought to him by the man.

Then the wife of Shimadzu had arrived. Narabara had cause to re-

member vividly her first appearance in his favorite house of entertainment. It had been an occasion of much preparation.

All of the most distinguished and the oldest patrons of the house of Shimadzu had taken great care to be present. A sumptuous feast had been made ready, and each patron was in his accustomed place, when the silken hangings of a seldom-used entrance parted and Shimadzu appeared, leading by the hand a diminutive figure. She wore a *kimono* of dove-gray silk, tied about with a purple *obi*. Her hair was done high on her head and spread out like a fan in the butterfly mode of coiffure. Altogether, she presented a bewitching appearance. Extending her arms, like the wings of a bird, in a semicircle that began at the waist, reaching an arm's length away, she prostrated herself before the company, her forehead touching the floor. A murmur of admiration and approval went up from the assemblage. The guests, rising from their chairs, bowed profoundly before her. A moment later the little figure, raising itself from the floor, stood proudly erect. There was not a trace of embarrassment on her face. In fact, she hurried forward with the air of a business woman, crossed to a chair that had been twisted out of position to suit the whim of an old patron, in whose settled nook it stood, and set it back against the table. The company watched the movements of the bride curiously.

"That should be so," she said to her husband, in excellent English.

Shimadzu delightedly explained to his guests that in San Francisco she had catered to English customers; and, he added, she had had the finest trade on the Pacific coast.

Within a comparatively few hours the entire policy and management of the house of Shimadzu were altered. The day following the advent of the wife of Shimadzu a glaring advertisement appeared in the newspapers soliciting the trade of American patrons. Outside the door of the restaurant a poster announced that Ma-

dame Shimadzu had taken charge of the place and was now ready to receive customers.

From that time forward the hospitable Japanese precincts hitherto reserved exclusively for sons of Nippon became the stamping-ground of that class which, drinking unknown wines in foreign show restaurants, calls itself "bohemian." Writers who had gained a certain short vogue, accompanied by actresses, were to be found in profusion. And curiously enough the place was known to these no longer as the house of Shimadzu, but "that cute little place of Madame Chrysanthemum's."

Before this peroxide invasion the guests of Shimadzu—the Japanese guests—melted away. A few of them out of old-time loyalty still continued to visit the place, but only out of loyalty. To remain, they were compelled to battle constantly with Madame Shimadzu, whose management of the restaurant's interior set at variance all traditions. The nooks and corners, hitherto occupied for years by this or that Japanese dignitary, were either utterly eliminated or were so altered that their former owners no longer recognized them. To the apathetic Shimadzu the old patrons went.

"May it please you," they complained, "your honorable wife has so altered the appearance of your honorable house that we no longer recognize our insignificant selves."

Shimadzu shrugged a fat shoulder, something he had not done prior to his marriage.

"Pray complain to Madame Shimadzu," he said; "she augustly runs my insignificant house."

Madame Shimadzu had been so spoiled by the flattery that had always been her due that at the first question of her authority her temper burst out on the unfortunate Japanese gentlemen who had ventured to complain, the chief of whom was Narabara. Thereafter he was an object of especial dislike to her, and she took a malicious pleasure

in making him as uncomfortable as possible, never allowing the opportunity to escape her of venting her spleen on him.

Meanwhile, the month of suspense allotted to Narabara by Miss Wallace came to a conclusion. Narabara with a carriage waited on her during one of those nights that had been celebrated formerly in the house of Shimadzu as "ladies' days." Enough Japanese were still present in the restaurant on their arrival to make their wearing of Japanese costume not a subject of uncomfortable remark.

"How changed everything is!" the girl exclaimed to Narabara, as they were seated in the corner of the new arrangement as near as possible to that once occupied by Narabara.

The girl's first mood of disappointment wore off as the meal and the evening progressed. The leaping forth of the music wisely retained by Madame Shimadzu brought back the old light to the girl's eyes. Madame Shimadzu herself was nowhere to be seen.

"Yes, my dear Narabara," the girl told the artist as they sat listening to the music, "I feel all Japanese to-night."

The *kimono* she wore set off her Oriental blood. She looked unmistakably Japanese this night.

"You will marry me?" the artist breathed forth.

"I think I—" began the girl.

The quick eye of Madame Shimadzu as she entered identified at once the feature traits of the Eurasian manifest in the young girl at Narabara's side. It was a mixture of blood she despised. Angrily she crossed to Narabara's table. Just as the young girl was about to answer Narabara, Madame Shimadzu blazed out at her, regardless of the numerous company in the crowded supper-room.

"Despicable woman," she cried, with the bitterest vindictiveness, "out of my house!"

The company stared. As the insult left the lips of Madame Shimadzu,

Miss Wallace started hastily to her feet. She spoke in a hard, tense voice to Narabara.

"You see what your race is, how they regard me. No! I thank heaven I am not entirely pagan myself. I certainly shall not marry you."

Then, without waiting to slip off the *kimono* she wore, the girl passed quickly to her carriage and was driven away before the astounded Narabara could offer to conduct her thither.

Two evenings later there was open, violent revolt in the house of Shimadzu, led by Narabara. The old patrons, under the vigorous direction of the artist, met in grave, earnest and serious conclave. Everything was done in order. First, the grievances of each member were set forth at voluminous length in Japanese hieroglyphics. Then a remedy was discussed and an ultimatum framed for Shimadzu. A deputation appointed from this conference waited on Shimadzu, carrying several rolls of parchment. They were little, yellow-faced men, but they were in earnest.

"Shimadzu, your honorable house has become an offense and an abomination to all good sons of Nippon," said Narabara, the spokesman. "The old places where we long sat, which were hallowed to us because of the dreams dreamed there, are no more. The *shoji* of this place are no longer visible to the eye of Japanese gentlemen alone. Honorable barbarians are permitted to enter at will. They are a curse, and they taint the air—"

The spokesman paused. Shimadzu rolled his eyes lazily.

"But my wife, she do all that; tell her," he objected.

"True, your wife has done this. It is of her we would speak," went on Narabara.

He paused ominously.

"You must divorce your wife," he growled.

"Divorce my wife!" shrieked Shimadzu. "Gods!"

"Divorce your wife," repeated Nara-

bara, while the seven other members of the delegation bowed as one.

"If I refuse?" said Shimadzu.

"If you refuse, your name shall be branded throughout all Nippon as an unworthy son, as one who, keeping an orderly house, has made it an offense to his countrymen; as one who, having made a home for exiles, has turned them out."

"No, no!" said Shimadzu.

"If you refuse, thirty devout Japanese gentlemen shall pray that your soul be accursed."

"No, no!" Shimadzu groaned, cringing and doubling over.

"I would consent, gentlemen," he added, "but how can it be done? I cannot get rid of the woman."

"It can readily be managed," relentlessly continued Narabara; "do as in Nippon. Announce to the woman that you have divorced her. Give her her passage money and such dowry as you may choose, and let her return to that Western city which can spare her but ill."

"It shall be done," said Shimadzu.

When next Miss Wallace, in response to the fervid appeals of Narabara, visited the house of Shimadzu, all was as before. The serpent had departed from their Eden. Old patrons were in their former places. All was restored, and the "bohemians" were rigidly turned away at the door,

to their complete disgust and bewilderment. Only Japanese and the women brought by them and their friends were allowed to enter the place. The sign was gone from the front of the house. The advertisement had disappeared from the newspapers.

At first Narabara's guest was constrained and distant. Hers was a sensitive soul, and she had been deeply wounded. But as each event of the evening reassured her, her mood softened. When at the meal's close the *shoji* rolled back, disclosing the old pictures of Japan she had loved, she uttered a cry of joy. Narabara thought his time had come.

"Shimadzu divorce his wife," he remarked, generally.

"Divorced his wife!" she exclaimed.

"Why, how could he do that?"

Then Narabara shrugged expressive shoulders.

"All the same thing—he send her away," he said, simply.

"Well, what if he has?" she asked.

"We make him do it, partly because she change everything and have vicious temper, most because she insult you. Now will you marry me?"

The girl laughed a trifle hysterically. Then, her eyes shining with tears in the semi-darkness of the room, she laid her hand impulsively on his.

"Yes, I will, Narabara," she said, softly.



THE TOPER'S VIEW

TO keep him in his state of grace,
The youth can find no safer place
Than where they sell potatoes;
For there the best of spirits are
To serve whoever seeks a bar
To evil inclinations.

JOHN B. TABB.



SOME people not only let their right hand know what their left hand does, but they also bring in their feet.

A COIN

HEREON, about the noble brow, austere,
 Showing Aurelius of the master mind,
 Behold the imperial laurel intertwined.
 Dull'd by the earth, where many a speeding year
 This disc lay hidden from the sunlight clear!
 If the insensate metal could but find
 Articulate utterance, like our human kind,
 What tales of Roman glory we should hear!

Ponder upon the palms that it hath pressed!
 Noble and bondman, princess, courtesan,
 Haply for each it gratified desire;
 Perchance some emperor, for a jaded jest—
 Commodus, clowing like a charlatan!—
 Flung it for slaves to fight for in the mire.

CLINTON SCOLLARD.



JUDITH—What's a co-respondent in a divorce suit?
 ISABEL—That's the name of the plaintiff in her next divorce proceedings.



“THEY say pity is akin to love.”
 “Yes; but it's only a poor relation.”



THE CHEAT

LOVE and I threw dice one day;
 Love threw cinque and I threw tray;
 “Loaded dice!” I straightway cried;
 All my protests were denied.
 Love, in spite of all I said,
 Pocketed the stakes, and fled.
 Useless further to complain—
 I had lost my heart again.
 And the play was false, 'tis true.
 Ah, I wonder if he knew
 With what intricate device
 I myself had cogged the dice!

FRANK LILLIE POLLOCK.

EN GRÈVE

Par Léon Chavignaud

DEPUIS quelques mois, que disons-nous, depuis des années, il règne un peu partout une partout véritable épidémie, qui à envahi les prolétaires principalement. Nous avons voulu parler de la manie, à l'état latent, endémique de se mettre en grève.

Oh! soyez tranquilles, il ne s'agit point ici de faire de politique, ni par une controverse en "iste" ou en "ique," de tenter une propagande en faveur d'un ami se présentant à la députation. Nous voulons tout simplement nous divertir un brin en famille, puisque les grévistes en question nous en donnent l'occasion, ce qui est le contraire généralement.

Donc, les utilités d'un théâtre, que nous ne nommerons point de peur que son directeur ne se venge de notre indiscretion en refusant une de nos pièces . . . futures . . . à grand spectacle, viennent de suivre l'impulsion générale dans des circonstances qui nous paraissent assez comiques.

La troupe, dont ils faisaient momentanément partie, donnait avec un énorme succès une pièce à grand effet, dans laquelle une tempête furieuse à démâter tous les navires de la rade de Brest ou de l'un de nos plus grands ports n'y jouait pas le rôle le moins important.

Pour rendre l'effet des flots en courroux encore plus saisissant, le régisseur chargea l'allumeur de rampes de lui racoler en ville une quinzaine de jeunes vagabonds qu'il transforma en autant de vagues déréglées. On connaît le procédé, sinon le voici—il est toujours bon d'instruire la jeunesse:

Avant de lever le rideau, on échelonnait les figurants invisibles sur deux ou trois rangs au fond de la scène, et l'on étendait sur leurs têtes une immense toile vert-bouteille qui représentait l'océan Atlantique dans le golfe de Biscaye. Ensuite, tandis qu'un sinistre coup de tonnerre en tôle donnait dans les coulisses le signal de la tempête, arrivait un génie marin, basse-taille, gros homme à maillot, perruque rousse et ailes bleu-tendre, qui étendait majestueusement les bras et chantait:

"Vagues qui reposez sous cette toile froide!
Réveillez-vous! Réveillez-vous!"

Aussitôt après l'impression du glauque et ventripotent chanteur, les jeunes flots se mettaient à sauter, à bondir, à se heurter en désordre, lançant à l'aide d'un petit soufflet du plâtre par des trous, de-ci, de-là, imitaient parfaitement le flot incohérent d'une mer déchaînée. C'était à s'y méprendre—pourvu que l'on ne fût point placé aux loges d'avant-scène et que l'on n'y regardât pas de trop près.

La pièce faisait fureur; et les recettes venant à augmenter, le directeur, reconnaissant, crut devoir faire grandir le prorata des membres de sa troupe. Il oublia pourtant "les vagues;" or, comme on parlait surtout de la scène de la tempête, que c'était le clou de la pièce, les "vagues" s'étaient imaginé, à l'exemple de la mouche de La Fontaine, qu'elles pouvaient à bon droit s'attribuer les trois quarts et demi du succès.

Avec cette croyance, l'ambition leur était venue, naturellement; leurs

prétentions avaient grandi et, en présence de l'oubli inopiné du directeur, elles avaient fini par se persuader qu'on voulait les exploiter, les tenir dans l'ombre, parce qu'on était jaloux de leur triomphe. N'étaient-ils pas acteurs comme les autres, après tout? Telle était leur opinion.

Après plusieurs conciliabules plus ou moins orageux et arrosés de petits verres au cabaret du coin, la mer dépêcha un syndicat de deux flots au directeur pour lui annoncer qu'elle allait se mettre en grève s'il n'augmentait pas ses appointements de moitié.

Devant de telles prétentions, l'imprésario envoya la mer au bain. Rendus furieux par la réception faite à leur députation, les quinze vagues jurèrent de se venger. Jamais serment ne fut plus pathétiquement fait sur les hauteurs d'un rocher plongeant au-dessus d'un océan à la veille de ne plus se déchaîner.

Le soir même, nos vagues prirent place dans leur ordre habituel et se laissèrent recouvrir en silence de la fameuse toile vert-bouteille, comme des ondes qui ne rouleraient aucune pensée de révolte.

Le rideau se leva et l'on entendit gronder dans la coulisse le terrifiant tonnerre en tôle. Un kilo de pois secs agités dans un grand crible imitèrent assez bien le bruit de la grêle et du vent; les poignées de résine en poudre jetées dans un réchaud produisirent des éclairs aux yeux des spectateurs effrayés, et le génie, sépulcralement, de sa voix la plus infernale, chanta:

"Réveillez-vous! Réveillez-vous!"

Mais la mer dormait toujours, n'ondulait même point. C'était la mer Morte dans un de ses calmes plats, ce n'était nullement la mer en courroux portée sur le programme et salariée comme telle par le directeur.

Le vent des petits pois redoubla ses sifflements; la feuille de tôle s'agita dans d'horribles convulsions; l'éclair succéda rapidement à l'éclair, mais les vagues semblaient toujours pétri-

fiées et se tordaient de rire *in petto*. Le cœur aussi bouillonnant de rage que la mer était paisible, le régisseur s'avança dans la coulisse, son tonnerre à la main, et avec un effroyable roulement souleva un coin de la toile verte:

Le flot, qui l'aperçoit, recule épouvanté.

"Eh! mer traîtresse et méchante," s'écria-t-il, la voix rauque, le front perlant de sueur, "que ne faites-vous les vagues? N'entendez-vous point ma foudre? Faudra-t-il que je vous écrase?"

Alors, l'un des députés du matin, au nom de la mer à plat ventre, s'avança crânement et, se campant les poings sur les hanches, reprit:

"De quoi! la mer se met en grève— C'est-il des vagues à dix sous ou à vingt sous, lesquelles voulez-vous?"

Le régisseur plongea ses regards dans ceux de son audacieux interlocuteur d'un air de *quos ego!* à le faire rentrer dans le troisième dessous; mais il n'avait pas le trident de Neptune et le flot ne bougea point. La basse s'enrouait à chanter inutilement:

"Réveillez-vous! Réveillez-vous!"

Les violons commençaient à l'orchestre à se sentir des crampes dans les doigts, la provision d'éclairs diminuait, le vent faiblissait, et par contre, dans la salle, une sourde tempête grondait parmi les spectateurs mécontents: c'était la ruine!

Se trouvant pris au traquenard, le régisseur accorda les vingt sous demandés, jura de les payer plutôt de sa poche.

A peine avait-il fini de parler, qu'à l'ébahissement du génie basse-taille qui commençait à douter de la vertu de ses évocations, les vagues se soulevèrent comme fouettées par un grain terrible, un cyclone; elles roulèrent, s'élancèrent, s'entre-choquèrent, s'affaissèrent si bien, qu'un machiniste, ancien matelôt de la flotte, se croyant réellement sur un quai maritime, dit à un camarade:

"Dis donc, Auguste, as-tu bien amarré l'embarcation, car il fait un temps effroyable, mon vieux!"

THE UNCONSCIOUS DETECTIVE

By Caroline Duer

IT seems strange that an inoffensive old maiden lady, such as I am, should be called on by Fate to play a prominent part in the stirring events that have lately taken place. I am naturally of a retiring disposition; I abhor anything conspicuous; I detest the clamor and confusion of modern times—the automobiles, the cable-cars, the telephones, but most of all the yellow journals; and yet here is my picture in the yellowest of them, taken as I gave my reluctant testimony in the great Hurst Robbery Case!

I maintain that all this would never have happened if my elder sister, Griselda, had not taken a fancy to live on that side of Staten Island where the Hursts' big country-place is situated. What if we were distantly related to them? A houseful of gay, selfish young creatures could not derive much pleasure from the fact that two elderly ladies had settled within a mile of their gates; and, as far as our pleasure was concerned, I confess I did not expect my life to be much enlivened by the society of the modern generation. In this, however, I was mistaken.

Ethel Hurst, the youngest of the family, used often to drop in at luncheon, particularly when she had quarreled with her sisters. As she was usually accompanied by from two to six of the ten dogs they kept, and as I positively refused to permit one of these to set paw in the house, there was always a great throwing of badly aimed stones, cracking of whips and shouting of orders before they could be persuaded to go home, that she might enter our primly set little din-

ing-room, where she poured out her grievances much faster than she ate her chop. Mary, the eldest, would stop for afternoon tea, and kindly and pleasant gossip, on her way home from a day's shopping in town; while Jane, who was married, liked to bring over her husband, her brothers and such guests as happened to be staying at Hawkshurst of a Sunday afternoon.

In this way I grew to know the whole family rather well, and became inured to all sorts of surprises in the way of their friends. A fat, dusky, dumpy Indian prince, a tall, thin Australian missionary—spared, I am sure, by the natives on account of his exceedingly bony structure—stray Englishmen of all ranks and pretty women of every description, had been crowded from time to time into our tiny, low-ceilinged drawing-room, and fed by Griselda on tea and crumpets, while Jane or Ethel did the honors of ourselves, our house and our curiosities.

We became almost as much of a Sunday institution as the Home Farm, and they seemed to take quite as much pride in calling attention to our good points.

"Aren't they dears, Mr. Popover? And isn't it the darlinest little house? And that piece of cannon by the gate where the horses shied, you know, that came from Fort Sumter—didn't it, Miss Verbena? And it was given to you because you told a gentleman who sat next you at dinner somewhere that you'd been brought up to hate a Democrat and a Southerner, and he said he was both, and sent you the can-

non as a reminder, didn't he? And that silhouette of Washington was given to your great-grandmother by Mrs. Washington, wasn't it, Miss Griselda? And that's her writing on the back, isn't it?" etc., etc.

Although these onslaughts of riotous youth made Sunday anything but a day of rest, I had become so accustomed to them that I found myself looking forward with something like dread to the time when the Hursts should go to town for the Winter and leave the country to silence and to us. It was therefore not unpleasant to me to hear Mary informing Griselda, one afternoon late in November, that this year they meant to spend Christmas at Hawkshurst and have a Christmas tree for all the children in the neighborhood, a gay party staying in the house, games, charades, and heaven knows what, in the way of amusement besides.

"Perhaps you will be very kind and knit me some socks, Miss Griselda," Mary said; "and Miss Verbena will dress me some dolls for the tree. There are a great many children of all ages to be provided for."

"I will," said I, "though I disapprove of most children and all parents. But one thing I do insist on, and that is that those dolls shall have clothes which come on and off. I am sure it teaches children slovenly ways to give them dolls with tawdry dresses, sewed on, and no petticoats underneath. A child absorbs bad impressions as a sponge absorbs water."

"You shall dress them just as you please, Miss Verbena," she answered, laughing.

Of course, this entailed several journeys to town—not on my part, for I hate the suburban shopper and seldom destroy my self-respect by traveling in public conveyances; but the Hursts were indefatigable, and even Griselda, in spite of my warnings, trusted her elderly bones to the complicated system of railways, boats and trolleys by which the unfortunate countrywoman, "faint but pursuing," arrives in the heart of the metropolis. There

was some excuse for Griselda, inasmuch as it was the day before Christmas, and all the most important things had, of course, been overlooked till the last moment; but I felt outraged in every sensibility when I saw her totter off the train with parcels hung all over her. I had walked to the station to meet her, and I hastened to relieve her of some of her burdens. Between us one slipped unnoticed to the ground, and it was not till a mild-faced, blue-eyed young man ran along the platform after us to restore it that we were aware of our loss. As we walked along the snowy, glimmering road in the twilight, Griselda relating the conflicts of her day to me, and I boasting the pleasing solitude of mine, the Hurst omnibus dashed past us, overflowing with people and top-heavy with trunks.

"I suppose they came down in the boat with you?" I remarked.

"Oh, yes," she returned; "and their men-servants, and their maid-servants, and their dressing-bags, and their jewel-cases. Though how some of the women could wear any more trinkets than they had on already I don't see. It seems to me a very vulgar fashion to string one's self over with diamond chains in the daytime, and to wear pearls as big as walnuts in one's ears, as Mrs. McMoneys did to-day."

"She probably had on a tiara under her hat," said I. "She's too new to her jewels to take them as a matter of course. I suppose the assemblage of sparkling frivolity and white-shirted imbecility at that table to-night will be beyond belief. You're not going to the charades, I hope?"

Griselda surveyed me with a pitying air. "You must think I've taken leave of my senses," she said. "What should you and I be doing at Hawkshurst to-night? No, no; I'll save my energies for the Christmas tree to-morrow, where I may be of some use."

I opened the gate as she spoke, and, as we entered, two figures, which had been following us ever since we left the station, shot past into the darkness.

"I had no idea those men were so near," I observed, looking after them. "I hope they are not belated guests of the Hursts, who have been listening to our candidly expressed opinion of them."

"I don't believe it will afflict them very much if they have," returned my sister, drily; and we went into the house and shut the door on the cheerless Winter landscape.

It was a cold night. As Griselda and I sat sewing and talking after dinner in the pleasant glow of the lamp and the fire, we could hear the wind ping-pinging across the hills, and the frozen branches rattling as they crossed and recrossed each other. The old red damask curtains moved perceptibly whenever a gust struck the window, and the chimney-pot squeaked in a dismal minor key; nevertheless, we had a comfortable Christmas-Eve feeling as we packed our dolls and socks away in their boxes, finished, and wished each other good night.

"I suppose those foolish young people will sit up till two o'clock," said Griselda, "and not half of them will wake up in time to go to church tomorrow."

She had a touch of rheumatism the next morning, as it happened—the result of shopping in overheated places the day before—and did not go to church herself; but the very first thing I saw, as I stepped briskly out over the frozen path, was the Hurst wagonette bowling down the road. It was so full of waving feathers and floating veils and flapping fur boas that I hastily conceived it to contain every woman about the place. By the time it came abreast of me, however, I perceived that the three Hurst girls and one feminine guest were its only passengers.

Mary stopped the coachman. "Won't you get in, Miss Verbena?" she said. "I know you're a great walker; but I think you must be late for once, or else we never should have overtaken you."

I complied, and the handsome,

sleepy-eyed Ethel made room for me beside her.

"Don't you think it was a shame to make me get up, dear Miss Verbena?" Ethel began. I was the life of the party last night, wasn't I, my dear?" This to the little blonde guest who seemed lost between her large hostesses. "And I acted so well in the charade that I've real black-and-blue marks all over me, where I fainted, you know; and Harry—Mr. Kerr, I mean—" in response to a withering look from her elder sister—"proposed to me directly afterward, which is always fatiguing, isn't it, Jane? He used to propose to you—and the dogs kept me awake all night. I never heard them bark so. They used to do it in the Summer, of course, when they and the village dogs got together to bait the bear—our tame bear, you know, dear Miss Verbena—but now he's hibernating—"

"I wish you were," exclaimed Jane, half laughing. "She had us up three times, I do assure you, calling those wretched dogs. I feel utterly exhausted myself this morning."

"Well, I got them all inside at last," said Miss Ethel, "because I thought they were cold; but even then they wouldn't be quiet, so I finally made each of the family take one, and I divided the rest among the guests. Then we had peace."

"I wonder what the guests had," I remarked, as we drew up at the church gate and began to make our graceful backward descent.

The word upon Ethel's lips was checked by the hand of Mary.

Nothing could be more charming than the behavior of all the girls to Griselda and me. They insisted on driving me home, and stopping for Griselda, whom they wrapped in a fur cloak and carried away to luncheon. I begged off, for noise and confusion and the clattering of plates take away all my appetite; however, I joined them directly afterward, and a very merry party they were.

Griselda was tying red ribbons on the last Christmas presents, which Mary

and Jane were waiting to hang on the tree. The guests were variously occupied; some showering salt, or winding tinsel, or fixing candles on the branches; some on their knees sorting sugar-plums; some on step-ladders, altering decorations to suit an insistent high-voiced critic. Each of the Hurst boys was armed with a pail of water, and a sponge on the end of a pole, to put out possible conflagration. Servants were flying to and fro. The hour for the lighting of the tree drew near and already groups of people, little and big, were arriving.

The rector and his children—who came in the rattling old station-fly, which we had engaged to take us home later—the Aldens from across the hills, the Gastons from the other side of the island, all the neighbors and their children, the farm people, the lodge-keeper's family, the gardener and his son, the coachman and his daughter, all the servants in the house and most of those out of it, were assembled in the hall waiting for the doors to be opened. The dogs, with the exception of three favorites, who, in deference to me, were shut up in the billiard-room, had been banished to the stables. Ethel had lighted the last candle. Everything was ready. Then the doors were thrown back, the crowd streamed in, the big tree glittered, the little children clapped their hands, exclamations and cries of admiration resounded on all sides. No one was forgotten; and everyone seemed pleased with his or her particular remembrance.

Jane and Ethel had contrived a series of absurd surprises for their guests, and I was amused to see the little blonde lady presented with a pair of mock-pearl ear-rings twice as big—so Griselda said—as those worn by Mrs. McMoneys the day before, "a slight tribute from an anonymous friend;" while that loudly-laughing lady herself stood clasping what young Hurst informed her was "a halo in a hat-box—the only kind of head adornment he believed her to be without."

The rest of the house-party came in

for their share of mockery, and in the confusion of jeers and protestations I whispered to Griselda that I thought we might take our departure unnoticed. My sister, however, who is fond of young people, declared that she was enjoying herself immensely, and did not mean to go till it was all over. We were, therefore, among the last to leave; indeed, but for the rectory children who accompanied us—their father having walked—we were the very last.

We had hardly got to the gate when we heard somebody shouting at us to stop, and beheld Bob Hurst flying down the drive after us without coat or hat.

"There's been a robbery!" he gasped. "While we were all down-stairs at the Christmas tree, somebody went through the up-stairs rooms and made a clean sweep of all the jewelry and small silver he could lay his hands on. I want you to take me to the village, please."

"Not without your coat," said Griselda, firmly.

"I wanted to catch you, so I didn't stop for it," he answered, still panting, "but if you don't mind turning back——"

The house was in a state of the wildest excitement. Mrs. McMoneys, with her empty jewel-case, was in hysterics in the hall. Mary and Jane were attending her; while Ethel, followed by a troop of dogs, was flying from room to room. The men examined and questioned, the women conjectured, the servants stood about in groups, staring and whispering.

There appeared to be no clue. One of the housemaids, going up-stairs to light the lights, had found the rooms in a state of confusion—drawers pulled out, boxes rifled, the cushions swept clean of pins, and the dressing-tables cleaned of small silver. She had given the alarm; but the full extent of the mischief had not been believed till each lady, with her own eyes, beheld the devastation of her treasure-box; then fury culminated in despair when the loss of Mrs. McMoneys's priceless possessions was discovered.

There had been a brief instant of relief at the suggestion that it might be a practical joke of Ethel's, followed by a deeper desolation when that young lady indignantly asserted her innocence.

The thief, whoever he was, having helped himself to whatever he fancied, had probably slipped in among the departing people, where a new face, or a bundle more or less, might easily have escaped detection, and so had quietly vanished, leaving no trace behind.

Henry Hurst, having telephoned to the railway station, the boat landings and police headquarters, was now out making inquiries of the people on the place. Bob was going to the village with us to rouse the interest of the local detective force by promises of a great reward.

"You're not likely to find anybody to take an interest in anything to-day," said Mary, despondently.

"If only it weren't Christmas!" wailed Jane.

"I wish the dogs hadn't been shut up," cried Ethel, looking rather pointedly at me. "They would surely have smelt him out."

"Oh, we'll catch him all right," said Bob, squeezing in between Griselda and me. "Don't you worry." The door shut and we drove away.

Of course the robbery furnished the only topic of conversation between my sister and myself that evening; and perhaps it was because I was too deeply interested in discussing the affair to pay proper attention to what I was eating that I broke my tooth on an uneliminated pit in the prune pudding. The accident annoyed me greatly, as I had but just finished with the dentist; however, it is no part of my character to lament over the unavoidable, so I at once made up my mind to go to town in the morning and have it attended to. The dentist is about the only thing that ever induces me to brave those over-crowded, over-heated trains and boats.

I thought I had never felt a more delicious day. The air seemed full

of sunny sparkles and the wind blew in little soft, sudden gusts from the South. I started rather early, for I did not wish to meet any of the returning house-party, and Ethel's speech about the dogs still rankled in my mind, but I knew that there had been no news of the robber. Griselda, who abhors the telephone, had sent our man-of-all-work out the first thing in the morning with a note of inquiry.

I took a seat on the upper deck, at the back of the boat—I never go into those stuffy cabins if I can help it, there is no surer way of catching cold—and I put up the small sun-umbrella, which I always carry, to keep the intense rays of light from my eyes. It is a mistake to suppose the sun is less penetrating in Winter than in Summer; I find it more so.

As the boat left the dock a sudden current of air twisted the umbrella out of my hand and sent it plunging and sweeping down the deck, until it was finally stopped and secured by a beautifully dressed young man, who had just stepped out of the cabin.

"I believe this is yours," he said, shutting it up and returning it to me. His voice was low-toned and of a charming quality.

"Thank you; it is," I returned, immediately opening it again. "I am much obliged to you."

"Not at all," he said, lingering beside me as if he rather wanted to go on talking. Looking at him more particularly I fancied I had seen his face before. Perhaps at church? Perhaps at the Hursts? I could not be sure.

"You don't live on this side of the island, do you?" I asked, as he showed no disposition to move.

"I don't live on any side of it," he answered, smiling. "I live in New York. I came down to spend Christmas with some friends."

"I did not see you at the Hursts' Christmas tree yesterday, did I?" I inquired. "If so, you must forgive me for not recognizing you. I am a little near-sighted, and there were

a great many people. Besides, I fear I have reached an age when all young men look alike to me."

"I was only there for a few minutes," he said. "It happens that the people I was staying with do not know the Hursts at all well. We felt rather 'out of it.' I am sorry, for they have a fine house that I should like to have gone over thoroughly—I am crazy about old places—and then, the Miss Hursts are very handsome. No, I do not think I saw you there, but I remember picking up a parcel for you on the station platform the other evening." He looked quizzically at me and my umbrella.

"Thank you, I believe you did," said I, gazing up at his mild face and blue eyes.

There was a pause. There did not seem anything particular to say, nor any particular reason for saying it, and yet as long as he stood there I did not like to sit in silence.

"I suppose you heard of the burglary," I observed; "and I almost think it served those silly young women right, for wanting to deck themselves out so inappropriately. The idea of bringing their jewels down to the country!"

"Perhaps they won't do it again," he said, laughing. "Did they lose much? Did the thief get away? The news hadn't reached us."

I explained in detail, and he appeared much interested.

"It was a devilish clever idea to choose that time, wasn't it?" he said.

"I suppose it was," returned I; "one is more apt to expect such an attack at night."

"And, suffering Moses! What a night it was!" he exclaimed. "I nearly froze to the seat of the sleigh."

"You were out, then?" I said, distantly, for I thought his expressions vulgar.

"I was, for my sins," he answered, shivering at the recollection; "and I hate the cold with every inch of me."

"You must not let me keep you

standing here, then," I remarked, with polite decision. "I think the wind has grown much stronger since we started."

He looked amused. "You won't come inside?" he said.

"No, thank you; I prefer anything to that steam-heated atmosphere."

"Then I'll say good-bye, for the present," said he, and lifted his hat and left me.

For a few minutes after he disappeared I sat still, then I got up and began to pace up and down the deck. The wind was rather fresh.

"If that young man enters into conversation with young women as freely as he does with old ones, I should imagine he might some day get himself into trouble." I thought. "I must take another look at him. I wonder whether the Hursts will recognize him from my description. I should like to know where he comes from."

As we had nearly reached New York by this time, I shut my umbrella and made my way slowly to the stairs. I found him at my elbow as I descended to the lower cabin, and he walked with me to the front of the boat.

"I hope you haven't taken cold," he said, agreeably.

"I hope you enjoyed the society of Little Italy," I retorted, pointing to a group of dark-haired, black-eyed, chattering women and children, each armed with an enormous basket or bundle, and all very dirty.

"Ah, I only wish I were in real Italy," he sighed. "Have you been abroad? Have you traveled much? Didn't you enjoy it?"

"I have been abroad," said I, tartly, "and I didn't enjoy it. I don't find anybody else's country any better than my own; and as for traveling, I think it hardens the heart, softens the brain and destroys all sense of decency."

He laughed so immoderately at this speech that I began to think he was making fun of me. We were almost the last people to leave the

boat—I always delay as much as possible to let the crowd get well ahead of me, and he, apparently, was in no hurry. I wondered when I was likely to get rid of him.

I nodded to old Jerry, the deck-hand, as I walked across the gang-plank, and met, with some surprise, the sharp glance of a thin, red-haired, ferrety man, who stood beside him.

"I wonder if that's a detective," I said, involuntarily turning to my companion.

"Very probably," he answered, easily. "They'd be sure to watch the boat landings. It's a lucky thing for a stranger like me that I'm talking with an old inhabitant like you."

He was looking over his shoulder as he spoke, and cannoned so heavily against one of the blue-shirted ferry-men approaching from an opposite direction that his brown derby hat flew off and bounded across the drive-way. He darted after it, narrowly escaping the advance of a big red brewery wagon, with two enormous Percheron horses, that was just plunging off the boat. But as he reached the other side, the hoof of one of the horses grazed the hat, and sent it rolling in my direction. I deftly speared it with the point of my umbrella.

"One good turn deserves another," I said, pleasantly. "You came to my assistance a little while ago—" I stopped short as I realized, first, that he could not hear me, and second,

that the point of the umbrella had gone through the crown.

This was dreadful! I had ruined the hat of that young man!

"Oh, I beg your pardon," I began, as he approached me from behind the wagon. "I'm afraid I've done a great deal of mischief." Here I tried to detach his unfortunate head-gear from the end of my implement.

"It won't come off, either," I added, with a violent tug.

But it did come off, and it left behind a false crown, while out of the real one rolled a collection of jeweled "pins and rings and things," among which I recognized ornaments of all sorts—diamonds, rubies, pearls, sapphires—that I had heard described and frantically bewailed by their late owners on Christmas Day.

Well, I held the hat with the grip of Fate, and screamed with the voice of Destiny—and Jerry, and the detective, and several policemen, and all the deck-hands gathered round us, and caught the young man.

I had to appear against him, and I hope I gave his lawyer a bad quarter of an hour. I am not the sort of witness who can be brow-beaten with impunity.

The jewels were all recovered (it appeared "another gentleman" had the small silver), my name and my picture got into the yellow journals—and that is all the story.

But the Hursts have called me the "Unconscious Detective" ever since that day.

AN OLD SAW REFILED

MONEY makes the mare go;
How jolly 'tis to ride
A rattling pace, firm ground below,
And pleasure by your side!

But somewhere back two slaves, alack!
Reeking with stable soil,
Have fed the hack and smoothed the track—
Economy and Toil.

JULIA BOYNTON GREEN.

THE DOUBLE NEGATIVE

A PROBLEM PLAYLET

By Francis M. Livingston

SCENE—*The boudoir of MRS. ALTHEA WALDMERE, in her husband's handsome house in West Seventy-third street. Music of violins at rise of curtain. MRS. WALDMERE is seated before a dressing-table, on which a number of jewels are lying. She is attired in an exquisite morning-gown. The sunlight streams through the window, touching her bronze hair. She toys with the jewels a few moments, then puts them in her jewel-case and closes the lid. She rises suddenly and crosses the room to the window. She seems deeply troubled. She speaks no word, but her expression and gestures, aided by the symbolic music of the violins, indicate that the following thoughts are passing through her mind:*

ALTHEA—I can endure this life no longer. The secret is killing me. My husband, who is noble and true, and everything my heart can wish for, trusts me implicitly. I am not worthy of his confidence, unless I tell him all the past. Yes, I shall tell him. Death would be preferable to this continued silence—silence which means only deceit.

She returns to the dressing-table, seats herself, and lets her head rest on her hands, remaining thus for some time. The music continues. A light knock is heard at the door, but ALTHEA does not raise her head. The knock is repeated, and after an interval the door opens softly. A handsome man about thirty-six years old enters. He is RALPH WALDMERE, husband of ALTHEA. He starts at seeing her attitude. The music of the 'cellos is now joined to

that of the violins. RALPH takes a step forward and hesitates. A look of pain crosses his face. It is apparent that he is thinking as follows:

RALPH—My wife—how beautiful she is and how good! Is she praying? No, she is asleep. No, not that, either; she is thinking—thinking of me. I cannot tell her now. I shall go out as softly as I entered. But no, that would be cowardice. I have resolved to make my confession to-day—and make it I will. (*Aloud—very softly*) Althea!

ALTHEA (*raises her head. The music ceases abruptly*)—It is you?

RALPH—It is I. Of what were you thinking?

ALTHEA—Of nothing.

RALPH—I thought, perhaps, it might have been of me.

ALTHEA (*smiling*)—Do I not always think of you?—I meant I was thinking of nothing unusual. Sit down, Ralph. (*He takes a chair a little distance away.*) Nearer—sit nearer to me, my dear husband.

RALPH—Nearer by-and-bye, perhaps; perhaps never again at your side. Althea, I have something to say to you. (*ALTHEA turns pale.*) I am not happy. Are you happy, Althea? (*She shakes her head.*) I felt it. My unhappiness has caused yours. We are unhappy because there is a secret between us. Our love cannot exist together with this secret. Either the secret must die, or the love must perish. It is the secret that must die, my wife.

ALTHEA—Yes, the secret. I said

so to myself this morning. Well, I am ready, dear——

RALPH—What I have to say is hard to say to you whom I so love, you who have so trusted me——

ALTHEA—But surely you will not reproach me until I have spoken, I——

RALPH—Reproach you! No, I have no reproaches for you. I only——

ALTHEA—Ah, but it is the worst kind of reproach to look at me with those sad eyes, while I know that your heart——

RALPH—Althea, do not make it more difficult for me. Confession is bitter enough as it is.

ALTHEA—Do I not know that only too well? Therefore let me speak quickly and relieve my heart.

RALPH—Let *you* speak? But is it for me to speak!

ALTHEA—I must speak!

RALPH and ALTHEA (*together*)—Dear, when we met at Lenox five years ago— (*Both pause, and each looks at the other curiously.*)

RALPH (*slowly*)—It *was* five years ago.

ALTHEA—Yes, just five years. We were married the next Spring. (*A pause. The violins, muted, play six measures.*) What were you going to say?

RALPH—I was just wondering what you were on the point of saying.

ALTHEA—I? I was—dear, I do not like to interrupt you. You were about to tell me— (*RALPH is silent.*) Do you mean that you knew anything then?

RALPH—Did I know? I was just going to ask if you could have suspected that early?

ALTHEA—Ralph, dear, of what are we talking?

RALPH—We seem to be all at sea. (*Suddenly, and as though he had made a desperate resolve*)—Althea, when we met at Lenox there was a page in my life of which you were ignorant and of which I have never told you. The reasons for this were several. First——

ALTHEA — Ralph, stay a moment.

Do you mean that you have a secret, too?

RALPH — I a secret, *too!* Althea, can it be possible that you also——?

ALTHEA (*very rapidly*)—Dear, when we met at Lenox there was a chapter in my past of which I did not speak. It was not that I intended to deceive you, I——

RALPH—Althea, what are you saying? I came to confess to you.

ALTHEA—And I am confessing to you. I decided this morning I must. As I was saying just now, before we met——

RALPH—One moment, dear. (*The oboe plays through his speech.*) Have I, since our marriage, been always kind and affectionate? Have I done all I could to make you happy?

ALTHEA (*speaking through music from the harp*)—Oh, Ralph, how much none but I can tell. And I, have I failed in anything that a faithful, devoted wife should do?

RALPH—You have been perfection, Althea. What I was thinking is that you have a secret of which it must be painful to speak.

ALTHEA — And you, Ralph, have something in your life that it must distress you greatly to recall.

RALPH—Now, you see, each of us being thus situated——

ALTHEA—Yes, both in the same boat, as it were——

RALPH—Suppose we let the past go. We'll neither of us perform this disagreeable task of confessing.

ALTHEA (*clapping her hands*) — Capital! Let one balance the other. Oh, Ralph, how bright you are!

RALPH—You will never worry over my not having spoken?

ALTHEA — Never. Why should I mind your boyish escapades? And you will not regret my silence?

RALPH—Certainly not. Some school-girl nonsense to which I shall not give a second thought. . . . It *was* school-girl nonsense, wasn't it, Althea?

ALTHEA—Oh, yes, certainly—that is—er—well, it might be called so, I suppose. (*Hurriedly.*) And yours was a mere boyish prank, wasn't it, Ralph?

RALPH (*with a rather forced laugh*)—Yes, I was scarcely thirty at the time—what am I saying?—it was all so long ago that I have almost forgotten it—at least—

ALTHEA—Ralph, let us forget it entirely—forget them both.

RALPH—Agreed. Suppose we go for a morning spin in the Park.

ALTHEA—Charming! I shall be ready directly.

The scene is enveloped in utter darkness for ten minutes, during which fourteen flutes play in unison an intermezzo symbolic of the idea that the married state is the only right and happy one. A bass viol, which has been tuned one half-tone lower than these instruments, comes in occasionally with a

strain indicative of doubt and dissent. The lights are turned on full, and ALTHEA is seen clad in a beautiful carriage-dress. RALPH enters with top-coat and hat.

RALPH—The automobile is at the door.

ALTHEA—Let us go.

RALPH puts his arm about ALTHEA, and they move slowly toward the door. They both look immensely relieved and happy. The flutes play softly, but the bass viol sounds one low, discordant note.

RALPH (*thinking*)—What was she going to tell me?

ALTHEA (*thinking*)—I wonder if his was as bad as mine?

CURTAIN.



A DIFFERENCE OF OPINION

“I SUPPOSE horse-racing is all right, if you can afford it.”
“Oh, I don’t know. I think it’s twice as exciting when you can’t afford it!”



THE mule is not the most speedy animal in the world, but there is none more apt to show his heels.



A THEORY

HE—They are engaged? They have not known each other long.
SHE—No. Perhaps that accounts for the engagement.



WE generally achieve our own greatness, while other peoples’ is thrust on them.



WHEN a woman thinks she can’t be flattered, tell her it’s true—that flatters her.